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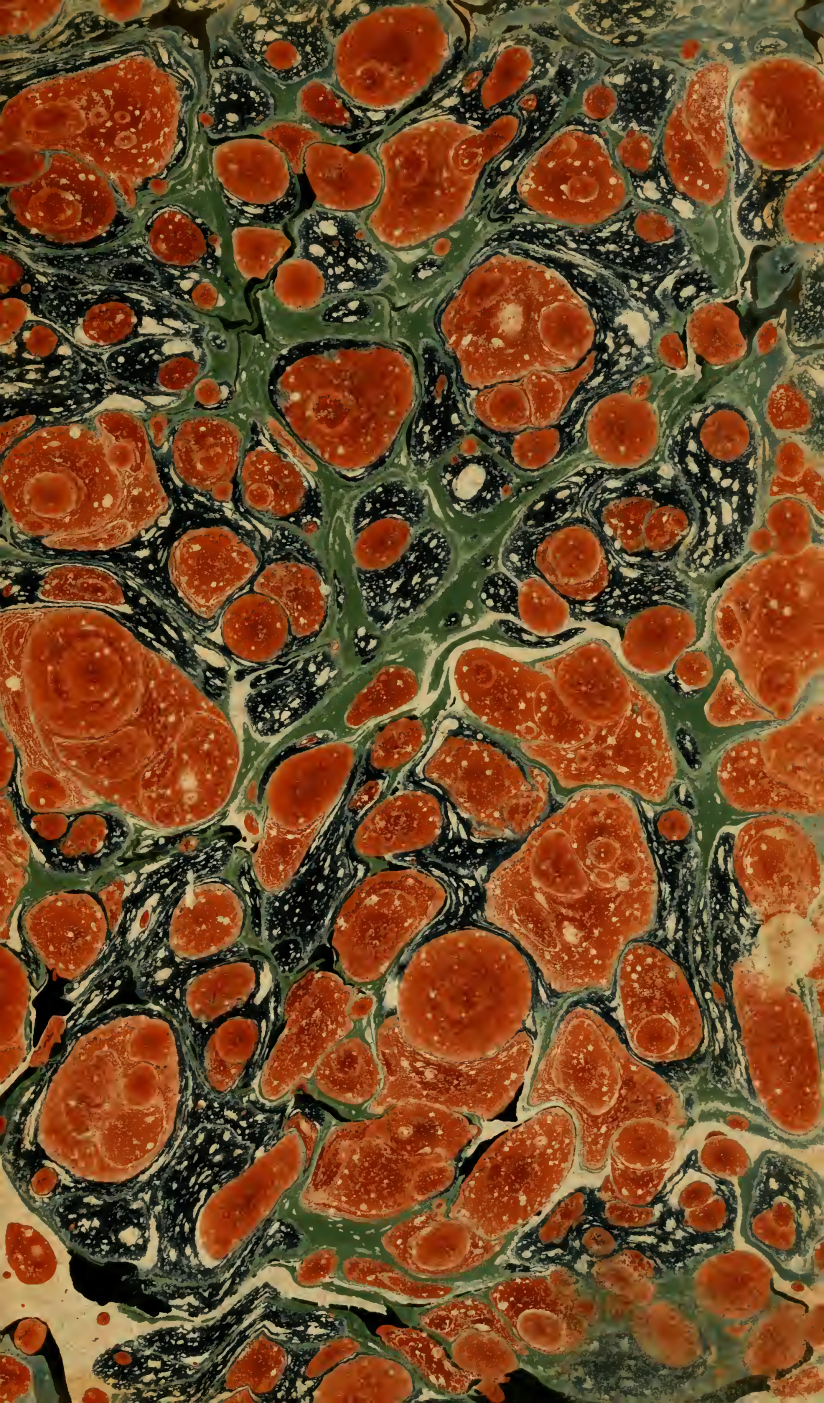
A friendly epistle to the Jews



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Edward Goldney Gent. Widow.

The Fear of the *LORD* is the Begining of Wisdom

London Pubd. New Years Morn. 1st Jan. 1761 St Pauls Church Yard.

A

FRIENDLY EPISTLE

TO THE

DEISTS,

AND

A RATIONAL PRAYER recommended to them,

In order for their CONVERSION to the

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Humbly Dedicated

TO HIS

Most Excellent MAJESTY,

KING GEORGE.

By EDWARD GOLDNEY, Senr. GENT.

LONDON,

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by HIS SON, EDWARD GOLDNEY, Stationer, in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, the second Door from *Watling-Street*.

[Price 2s. 6d. unbound without the Copper-Plates.]

MDCC LX.

The Ways of Man are before the Eyes of the LORD And

Fear God — Honour the King — and Rejoice —

Shall not be Manifested Neither Secreted from HIM. Mark IV. 22.

Deduced from — The Infallible Word of Truth. — The Divine Oracles.

Royal Declarations. — PROVERBS. Chap. XIX. v. 14 Chap. XXI. V. 10.
Verse 14. A Prudent Wife is from the Lord 10. Her Price is far above Rubies

Chap. III. v. 6. 7

V. 6th. In all thy ways acknowledge GOD and He shall direct thy Paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own Eyes: Fear the Lord.

PSALM. The XXXVII. v. 4. 34.

V. 4th. Delight thy self also in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thine Heart. v. 34 Wait on the Lord

PROVERBS. Chap. XVI. v. 3. 6.

V. 3th. Commit thy Works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established. v. 6. By the fear of the Lord Men depart from Evil

V. 12th. It is an Abomination to Kings to commit Wickedness for the Throne is established by Righteousness.

Chap. XXIV. v. 5. 6.

V. 5th. A Wise Man is strong, yea a Man of knowledge increaseth strength.

V. 6th. For by wise Counsel thou shalt make thy War and in Multitude of Counsellors there is safety.

TO

His most Excellent Majesty

KING GEORGE

THE THIRD.

Dearly Beloved Sovereign,

WITH the Profoundest Reverence, and the Highest Esteem and Veneration that is Possible for a Subject to have for his PRINCE, I most Heartily Congratulate Your Majesty on Your Happy Accession to the Throne of Your Royal Ancestors, to the Universal Joy of Real Protestants of every Denomination, Notwithstanding so suddenly Called thereto by the Awful momentary Death of Your Royal Grandfather, at a Time when He had in a Peculiar Manner Caused all true British Hearts to Triumph with Thanksgivings and Praises, His wise Counsels being Blessed with Success, and His Arms with Victory in EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA, and AMERICA.

A KING who for Thirty-three Years, ever ſince England was Bleſſed with Him on the Throne, hath not Receded from the Laws and Liberties of His Subjects, either Civil or Religious; who always, by Facts, proved that their Proſperity and Happineſs were the Deſire of his Soul, the very Comfort and Joy of His Life; which muſt manifeſtly appear to every unprejudiced Mind, who is not infected with the poiſonous Sentiments of the Dupes of Popiſh Antichriſtian Government; having ever baniſhed from His Dominions Perſecutions of every kind; for All His Subjects dwelt ſafely under their own Vine and under their own Fig-tree, as *Judah* and *Iſrael* did all the Days of the Wiſeſt of KINGS.

The Loſs of ſuch an Excellent PRINCE would have been more Deplorable, not only to this Nation, but to all Proteſtants in Europe, had not the moſt Worthy Sentiments of Diffuſive Goodneſs (uncorrupted Chriſtianity) been early implanted in Your Royal Breaſt, by the Precepts and Examples of Your much-lamented Royal Father and Grandfather, and by the Maternal Affection and Care of Your Invaluable MOTHER One of the very beſt of PRINCESSES.

Theſe Ineſtimable Conſiderations juſtly raiſe our National Hopes and Expectations of Continued Happineſs, and Anticipate our Fears, though Neceſſarily Engaged in the Midſt of War, Cauſed by Perfidious France and Ungrateful Hungary, who with Propriety may be compared to the two Inſatiable Daughters of the Horſeleech deſcribed by King Solomon, PROV. xxx. 15.

Your Majeſty's GLORIOUS Declaration from the Throne, " that the Peculiar Happineſs of " Your Life ſhall ever Conſiſt in Promoting the " Welfare of Your Subjects, by an Invariable " Reſolution to Adhere to, and Strengthen, our " EXCELLENT Conſtitution in Church and " State, and to Maintain the Toleration In- " violable; and that in order to draw down " the Divine Favour on Your Reign, it is " Your fixed Purpoſe to Countenance and Encou- " rage the Practice of True Religion and Virtue; " and that You are Determined to Proſecute the " War with Vigour, in order to that Deſirable " Object, a Safe and Honourable Peace," muſt Neceſſarily Fire every truly Proteſtant Heart with growing Love and Affection for Your Majeſty, and

with Christian Zeal and Gratitude to Inculcate in the rising Generation, Loyalty to Your Person and Government; constantly praying to Almighty God that He would Bless Your Majesty with Perfect Health, Long Life, Abundance of Wealth, and A HEART ADEQUATE to do GOOD with it.

Your Majesty being our KING, Defender of Pure Catholic Apostolical Christianity, and Determined to Countenance and Encourage True Religion and Virtue, is the Reason I humbly present my following Epistle to Your Majesty, because it hath a Rational Tendency to Extricate the Infatuation and Stupidity of Incredulous DEISTS, that such deluded Souls might become Desirous of receiving the Truth in the Love of it; and for the furthering and promoting of Real Vital Christianity in all Your Majesty's Subjects: For if the Sublimity of the Religion of the *Blessed Jesus* was complied with by all Ranks and Orders of Mankind, in their various Situations and Circumstances of Life, this World would become a Paradise in comparison of what it is at present; then Mankind would Devise Methods how and in what

Manner they might become Useful and Beneficial to each other; *Looking not only on their own Things, but also on the Things of others,* PH. ii. 4; *considering one another to provoke unto Love and good Works,* HEB. x. 24; *mindful to rebuke their Neighbours, and not suffer Sin upon them,* LEV. xix. 17; *restoring them in the Spirit of Meekness,* GAL. vi. 1; *that their Love might be without Dissimulation, abhorring all Sin, promoting all Good, kind and affectionate to all, as Brethren in Honour preferring each other,* ROM. xii. 9, 10.

If these Divine Precepts were Conscientiously Practised by all Professors of RELIGION, Humility would be their Ornament, Goodness their Delight, Pride and Vain-glory their Aversion, Injury and Oppression their Detestation, and Real Usefulness their Ambition; then Love and Unity, Peace and Tranquillity, would Universally Reign: For *Swords would be then turned into Plow-shares, and Spears into Pruning-hooks; Nation would not lift up Sword against Nation, neither would they have Occasion to learn War any more,* as Predicted by the Court Prophet, ISA. ii. 4.

As Your Majesty's Personal Happiness in particular, and these Nations in general, depends much on Your wise Choice of a CONSORT; therefore, from a Principle of Real Affection to Your Majesty's Welfare in all Things, and for this Our Native Country, I most earnestly Beseech Your Majesty frequently to supplicate the KING of KINGS with Humility and Fervency, that He would direct and influence Your Mind and Heart with regard to the Honourable State of Matrimony, as well as in all other Affairs of great Importance; for *a prudent Wife is from the Lord*, PROV. xix. 14; *her Value being much superior to Rubies*, PROV. xxxi. 10. And the infallible Word of Truth also assures Your Majesty, that in all Affairs of Human Life, by sincerely applying to GOD, He will *establish* Your Thoughts, PR. xvi. 3, and also *direct* Your Actions, PROV. iii. 6; for if You delight Yourself in HIM, He *will give You your Heart's Desire*, PSAL. xxxvii. 4.

Is it not agreeable to the Principles of Natural Religion as well as Revealed, to Believe that That DIVINE BEING who MADE Mankind

Capable of Thinking and Acting, must Always Have Immediate Access to Their Minds, and therefore POWER to DIRECT Them What to Think and How to Act? *for that in Him we live and move and have our Being, was the Declaration of Wise Heathens as well as Christians,* ACTS xvii. 28.

Beloved Sovereign, please to permit the Divine Oracles to be Your FIRST PRIVY COUNSELLOR; and *able Men, such as fear God, Men of Truth, hating Covetousness,* to be in the Direction and Management of all Public Affairs, EX. xviii. 21. 2 SAM. xxiii. 3. For *when the Righteous are in Authority the People rejoice; but when the Wicked beareth Rule the People mourn,* PROV. xxix. 2.

Young Joshua (Moses' *Successor) was full of the Spirit of Wisdom,* DEUT. xxxiv. 9. whom God commanded frequently to consult Holy Writ, that He might be very careful and exact in obeying it, which would render Him very Prosperous in His Princely Government, JOSH. i. 8, as the Sacred History assures us He was; for that *His Renown was very great,* JOSH. vi. 27, *being Resolutely Determined that He and His House would serve the* L O R D, JOSH. xxiv. 15.

Your Majesty making it Your Principal Concern to seek Wisdom from GOD, earnestly desiring above all Things, that Your Thoughts, Words, and Actions, might always be Influenced by it, will most Assuredly draw down from Heaven on Your Majesty all Blessings Your Heart can Desire; As "Perfect Health, Long Life and Peace, "the Peculiar Favour and Friendship both of "GOD and Man, Riches and Honours, Durable "Riches and Righteousness, Infinitely preferable "to the greatest Abundance of the most Refined "Silver and Gold, or the Valuablest of Jewels, "or any worldly Riches, Honours, or Pleasures "whatsoever," PROV. iii. 6 to 27. viii. 10 to 22.

With the Utmost Humility and Sincerity I subscribe myself Your Majesty's very Affectionate and Obedient Subject, always at Your Majesty's Command in any Thing that is not Inconsistent with my FIDELITY to the King of KINGS,

LONDON,
From My Son Edward Goldney's,
Stationer in St. Paul's Church-yard,
the Second Door from *Watling-Street*.

GOLDNEY'S Affectionate ADVICE

TO THE KING

FOR HIS HAPPY CHOICE

OF A GOOD QUEEN.

GRACEFUL GEORGE the THIRD! On Thee many Ladies Wait,
And at YOUR young tender HEART, with Looks and Glances Bait:
Beware! Beware! Chuſe the CHRISTIAN INDEED, a Noble Fair,
Whoſe Meekneſs, Piety, Benevolence, and Goodneſs Ornament Her,
Much more than Diamonds, coſtly Apparel, Paint or plaited Hair,
Which will happily guard and prevent Her from becoming a Snare:
Young, chearful, comely, and courteous let Her be, fit for to Grace
Thee with Her Lovely Charms, and Europe with Thy Glorious Race:
For when Virtue and Goodneſs, Youth and Beauty, in a Palace Shine,
Subjects will Revere their Earthly SOVEREIGN, next to DIVINE:
Let thy own Eyes be acquainted with the Lovely Lady's Real Face,
Her Smiles, Beauties, Virtues, Goodneſs, all Her Excellencies Trace:
Injudicious Kings and Princes other Maxims follow,
Who Marry by Proxy, But, afterwards ſorrow,
When Envoys fetch from far a foreign Queen,
Her Virtues are Unknown, as Her Charms unſeen.

IN PERSON, Dear SOVEREIGN,

Court The List'ning Maid.

No Envoy like Your Self, can Pleaſe, Conquer, and Perſuade,

Should a Stately Princeſs of Royal Blood,

Of Her Anceſtors full, as Lucifer Proud;

Boaſting High Birth, inſtead of Virtue's Charms,

Attempt thy Heart, endeavour to fill thine Arms,

Shun the Dangerous Bait, Her Allurings Flee;

Neither wed a mean, a vain, inſipid Pedigree,

Sad Experience has ſhown, as is well known,

How many a Monarch from an ill-bred Dame,

Fled with Diſdain, and on the ignoble Brood

Scatter'd their looſe Remains of Royal Blood:

From ILLS like theſe, GREAT SIR, Betimes Remove,

Continue Wife, Marry no Lady but whom You Heartily Love,

GOD grant Thy Nuptials BLEST with Auſpicious BIRTH,

To GRACE the EARTH, with A GEORGE the FOURTH.

That

YOUR MAJESTY'S EXCELLENT EXAMPLE,

Of Countenancing and Encouraging the Practice

Of Virtue And True Religion

May be Preserved to Britain

In The Protestant Line

To The End Of Time.

GENERAL PREFACE.

To All His Readers.

MY following Works are compos'd from a hearty ſincere Principle of real Love and Affection for the Spiritual Benefit and Advantage of all Mankind, particularly to rouſe Deiſts and Jews out of their ſtupid dreadful Incredulity, that the Deiſts may conſcientiouſly act agreeably to all the Moral Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Jews as *Iſraelites* indeed, ſo that they may become proper Objects of the Divine Complacency; That each of them might mend their Ways, the Evil of their Doings, that Almighty God might cauſe the Cloud and Miſt that is before the Eye of their Underſtanding to vaniſh, " that they might " believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and be ſaved,' *Acts* xvi. 31. That they may know that the Son of God is come, that He might give them an Underſtanding, that they might know Him that is True, even Jeſus Chriſt, who is the true God, and Eternal Life, 1 *John* v. 20.

Likewiſe that meer nominal Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, (both of the Clergy and Laity,) might not deceive themſelves by relying on a Speculative, or Head Belief, and complying with Modes and

Forms of RELIGION, while they are deſtitute of the Power of it, its Holy Influences, the Soul and Life of Chriſtianity, its very Quinteſſence, RELIGION ITSELF, as was the Caſe of the Hypocritical Phariſees and Scribes, "who "honoured God with Their Lips, while their Heart "was far from Him," *Mark* vii. 2. to 7.

I have exemplify'd both from Reaſon and Revelation, that if Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, would be Diſciples indeed of the Bleſſed Jeſus, their very Thoughts, Words and Actions, the whole Courſe and Tenor of their Lives and Converſations muſt be moved or influenced by the Goſpel of Chriſt, as Watches and Clocks are by their Main Spring, which ſets a going all its mechanical Powers in due Order and Regulation.

I have not choſen a florid Language, or a formal conciſe Method of writing, not endeavouring to tickle the Ear, but to mend the Heart, and have proved from many Paſſages of Holy Writ, that thoſe Happy Souls, who experience that their corrupted polluted Natures are in a Degree ſanctified, that have a Taſte and Reliſh for Righteouſneſs, will earneſtly deſire and endeavour to grow in Grace, that they will hunger and thirſt after it.

For the greater Proficiencies Mankind make in the Spiritual and Divine Life, they will continu-

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ally apply to Almighty God for further Degrees of His Rich Grace, in order to make greater Progreſs, that they may increaſe in the Fruits of Righteouſneſs, that they may be inriched with every Thing to all Bountifulneſs, 2 *Cor.* ix. 11. To be ‘ filled with the Knowledge of God's Will in all ‘ Wiſdom and ſpiritual Underſtanding, that they ‘ might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſ- ‘ ing, being fruitful in every good Work, and ‘ increaſing in the Knowledge of God; ſtrengthened with all Might, according to his glorious ‘ Power, to all Patience and long-ſuffering with ‘ Joyfulneſs; Giving Thanks unto the Father ‘ which hath made them meet to be Partakers ‘ of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; who hath ‘ delivered them from the Power of Darkneſs, and ‘ hath tranſlated them into the Kingdom of His ‘ Dear Son, in whom They have Redemption ‘ through his Blood, even the Forgiveneſs of Sins, *Coloſſ.* i. 9 to 15,

If any of my fellow Mortals ſhall receive the leaſt Degree of Spiritual Benefit or Advantage from any of theſe Works, I moſt humbly and earneſtly beſeech them to give Almighty God all the Honour and Praiſe. “ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but “ unto thy Name give Glory.” *Pſ.* cxv. 1. for it is the Work of Omnipotence only, that cauſeth

real

real Good to proceed forth from any Human Endeavours whatſoever, yea even from a *Paul* or an *Apollo*. 1 *Cor*. iii. 6, 7. "By Grace Mankind are "ſaved through Faith, and that not of themſelves, "it is the Gift of God". *Eph*. ii. 8.

"By the Grace of God I am what I am (ſays humble holy Heroick St *Paul*) "and his Grace "which was beſtowed on me, was not in vain; but "I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not "I, but the Grace of God, which was with me," 1 *Cor*. xv. 10.

The Principal Human Aſſiſtance, I have had to compoſe my following Works, was a Concordance to the Holy Scriptures, By *Alexander Cruden*, M. A. which very uſeful valuable Book, (without the leaſt worldly Advantage) I moſt ſincerely and earneſtly recommend to the peruſal of all thoſe who would willingly take Pleaſure and Delight, by being Honoured with a very intimate Correſpondence, a beneficial Acquaintance with the Word of God, which is able to make them Wiſe unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Chriſt Jeſus, 2 *Tim*. iii. 15. Almighty God grant that this may be the happy Caſe of us all, is the hearty ſincere Prayer of your moſt Humble Servant at Command, in Chriſt.

Edward Goldney, *Sen*r

London, the Joyous
Firſt of *Auguſt*, 1759.

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well Pleased,
Hear ye Him.

Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ

Blessed are they which do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled. St. Matthew Chap. V. Verse 6.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Verse 16.

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Verse 17.

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. Verse 44.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. St. Matthew VII. Verse 21.

For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother. St. Mark III Verse 35.

Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. St. John III Verse 5.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Verse 6.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and Truth. St. John IV. Verse 24.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another S. John XIII. 34.

By this shall all men know that Ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another. Verse. 35.

If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. St. John XIV. 23. 24.

GOLDNEY's EPISTLE

TO THE

DEISTS.

(Thoſe who deny all REVEALED RELIGION, acknowledging only NATURAL; as the Exiſtence of a GOD, his Providence, Virtue and Vice, the Immortality of the Soul, and Rewards and Puniſhments after Death.)

DEAR FELLOW-CREATURES,

IT is with the greateſt ſincerity of ſoul, and a real love and affection from my heart, that I make this addreſs to you, for the benefit of your immortal ſouls, which you are conſcious will be deſtined to unſpeakable happineſs or miſery at the grand and awful day of judgment, when the whole world will be ſummoned to give an account of their behaviour in it as rational and accountable creatures.

All mankind, by creation, are the ſons and daughters of God, who are made of one blood; conſequently

of one grand family: from which conſideration I find an earneſt deſire in myſelf to be an inſtrument in the hands of Providence, to be of as much ſervice to my brethren univerſally as poſſible, both for ſoul and body, as my capacity, ſituation and circumſtances in life will admit of, "whether they are Greeks or Jews, Barbarians, "Scythians, bond or free, of every kindred, tongue "and nation;" yea, even if I could ſuppoſe them all my enemies. This is the ſublime religion I learnt from the glorious goſpel of the bleſſed Jeſus; the ſatisfaction and pleaſure of which no one can conceive, but thoſe who experience it, and have it communicated by its divine author Chriſt, "the only begotten Son of God," John xiv. 21. Therefore I ſhould rejoice that you experienced the ſame divine pleaſures which are the happy conſequences of knowing "the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom "he hath ſent; whom to know is life eternal," John xvii. 3. The bleſſed Jeſus declares, "his doctrine was "not his own, but God's that ſent him; and that if "any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doc-"trine, whether it be of God, or whether he ſpake of "himſelf. He that ſpeaketh of himſelf, ſeeketh his "own glory: but he that ſeeketh his glory that ſent "him, the ſame is true, and no unrighteouſneſs is in "him," John vii. 16, 17, 18. which ſingle conſideration is an invincible argument of the divine authority and miſſion of the bleſſed Jeſus, to every rational, unprejudiced mind.

The whole ſcope and deſign of the doctrine which Chriſt delivered, eminently tends to promote the glory of God, and the univerſal good of mankind. This is

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an undoubted proof and evidence that his doctrine was only from heaven.

It is declared by divine authority, that the reaſon or cauſe why you, the Jews, or any other part of mankind do not believe in Chriſt, is for want of doing the will of God: which is implied in our Lord's anſwer to the Jews, recorded John vii. 17. I make no manner of doubt but that you will readily anſwer me, and ſay, If mankind were to judge of the truth of Chriſtianity by the profeſſors thereof, the practice of many heathens would be much more preferable to theirs; which is too notorious to be denied, but muſt be acknowledged as a lamentable truth, even amongſt many who make the greateſt pretences to it. But this is not to be attributed to the doctrine of the goſpel, which abſolutely aſſures us, that every one who wilfully lives in "the breach of "any one ſingle command, is guilty of the whole:" and that it is "not the hearers of the law, but the "doers of the law, who ſhall be juſtified; and that not "every one that ſaith unto Chriſt, Lord, Lord, ſhall "enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth "the will of his heavenly father."

Therefore St. Paul cautions mankind, leſt they ſhould deceive themſelves, and ſays, "Know ye not that the "unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God; "neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, "abuſers of themſelves with mankind; nor thieves, nor "covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extor-"tioners," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Thoſe profeſſing Chriſtians who live in an avowed commiſſion of any of theſe, or

any other ſins or vices, may be ſaid to be only ſpeculative believers, for their faith reaches the head, but not the heart: they are only nominal Chriſtians; but far from being the diſciples indeed of the bleſſed Jeſus, and will "receive their portion with unbelievers," Luke xii. 46. Therefore my principal deſign, by the grace of God, is to propoſe and point out ſuch methods, whereby you may become proper objects to receive evangelical faith.

The firſt virtue I would recommend to you is humility, a humble apprehenſion of the weakneſs and inſufficiency of your own underſtandings, to comprehend thoſe things which do not fall under our ſenſes; to be of a ſelf-diffident diſpoſition, your minds always flexible, open to conviction, always willing and ready to receive and embrace the truth in the love of it. I would alſo heartily and ſincerely recommend the neceſſary duty of ſelf-examination; not in a ſlight, curſory manner, but with the greateſt deliberation and impartiality, as an affair of the utmoſt importance. It being of the greateſt conſequence, whether you have or have not acted agreeably to the laws of natural religion; whether you do conſtantly live in the true fear and reverence of the Lord of heaven and earth. Whether you do govern your corrupt, unruly, headſtrong paſſions by your reaſon, which almighty God has inveſted you with for that excellent purpoſe: whether in every reſpect you do to others, as you would have others do to you: whether you are of a compaſſionate, ſympathiſing, tender-hearted diſpoſition: whether you do not do any injury to your fellow-creatures: but, on the contrary, do you

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do them all the good your circumſtances and ſituation of life will admit of?

Theſe, you muſt acknowledge, are the duties of natural religion.

Examine yourſelves, whether you have given that due attention, that juſt regard, to the external evidences to the truth of divine revelation, as the importance of it demands. Have you thoroughly weighed the authenticity of the writings of Moſes and the prophets? with what exceeding great care they were preſerved from one generation to another; and how the Jews had in their cuſtody copies of all the laws, in ſo exact a manner, as not to ſuffer a ſingle point either to be added to them, or taken from them, on any conſideration whatſoever.

Have you conſidered, that theſe writings contain not only their laws, or their inſtitutional rites and ceremonies, and their religious obſervances from time to time, and how they kept the paſſover as a memorial of the death of the firſt-born in Egypt; and that the ſame day, all the firſt-born of Iſrael, both man and beaſt, were by a perpetual law dedicated to God, and the Levites taken for all the firſt-born of the children of Iſrael, Numb. viii. 17, 18? that Aaron's rod which budded, was preſerved in the ark, in memory of the rebellion, and wonderful deſtruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and for a confirmation of the prieſthood to the family of Aaron? alſo the pot of manna, in memory of the children of Iſrael's being ſupported by manna from heaven, in a very miraculous manner, forty years together,

ther, while they were in the wilderneſs? that the brazen ſerpent was alſo preſerved, in memory of thoſe admirable cures it performed on all thoſe who were bit by the fiery ſerpent, whenever they looked on it, Numb. xxi. 9. which ſerpent remained to the days of Hezekiah, their good young king, who deſtroyed it, becauſe they idolized, and burnt incenſe to it? 2 Kings xviii. 4. They kept the feaſts of the Paſſover, of Pentecoſt, and the feaſt of Tabernacles.

The Paſſover was celebrated in memory of that wonderful and grand deliverance out of Egypt, Deut. v. 15. Their number was no leſs than "ſix hundred thouſand "and three thouſand and five hundred and fifty" ſouls, Numb. i. 46. Their daily ſacrifices, and yearly expiations, their new moons, and ſeveral feaſts and faſts, were repeated remembrances of theſe remarkable events. Have you conſidered that the children of Iſrael, with the ark of the Lord, paſſed over the river Jordan on dry land, to the number of forty thouſand; on which Joſhua cauſed twelve ſtones to be erected at Gilgal, in memory of ſo wonderful a providence? and that, when their children in future ages ſhould ask the meaning of it, it ſhould be told them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord: "when it paſſed over "Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off, and "theſe ſtones ſhall be a memorial unto the children "of Iſrael for ever". Joſhua iv. 7.

The book of the law was not only a hiſtory of real matters of facts, of what things were done from time

to

to time, but it contained fixed municipal laws and ſtatutes of the nation of the Jews, which were equally obligatory both on king and people.

That they had all been circumciſed, and conſtantly circumciſed their children, in obedience to the commands in the law of Moſes; that they had never eaten any ſwine's fleſh, or other meats prohibited in the law; that they had a magnificent tabernacle; that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and conſecrated by God, as his prieſts; by whoſe hands, and none other, the ſacrifices of the people were to be offered, and thoſe ſolemn inſtitutions to be celebrated; that it was death for any other to approach the altar; that their high prieſt wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's ordaining, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breaſt-plate, whence the divine reſponſes were given; that at his word the king and all the people were to go out and come in, Numb. xxvii. 21. Theſe prieſts were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters, therefore it was not poſſible to have perſuaded a whole nation, that they had known and practiſed all theſe ordinances, if they had not; or either to have received and acknowledged the books of Moſes for truth, which declared they had practiſed them, appealing to that practice, if it was not fact; which is abſurd to ſuppoſe, and which every rational mind will acknowledge.

The few ſcattered, diſperſed Jews now remaining in the world, who recognize many of the cuſtoms and ceremonies of their forefathers, are living teſtimonies of Judaiſm,

Judaiſm, as the ſacred eſtabliſhed laws under the old diſpenſation, and their ſacred records, do teſtify the truth of the new diſpenſation, under the glorious goſpel of the Meſſiah, which is foretold and propheſied of in the Old Teſtament in many places.

Therefore you will do yourſelves juſtice, if you will be very careful to examine and compare the propheſies that are there of the Meſſiah, with the fulfilment of them, as recorded by the four poor honeſt diſintereſted evangeliſts, relating to time, place, and all other circumſtances in the perſon, birth, life, death, reſurrection and aſcenſion of the bleſſed Jeſus, as recorded in the New Teſtament, in which there is no poſſibility of deceit or impoſture. Old propheſies, recorded for two thouſand years, (and all ſo agreeing) could not have been contrived to countenance a falſity; therefore nothing could be a falſity that could ſo compleatly fulfil all thoſe things relating to the Meſſiah, the Son of the living God, Jeſus of Nazareth, in the days of king Herod.

That there were ſuch perſons in his reign as John, whoſe ſirname was Baptiſt, and one whom they called Jeſus, is manifeſt and evident from Flavius Joſephus, a faithful Jewiſh hiſtorian, who recorded, "That it was "the opinion of numbers of the Jews, that Herod's "army was overthrown by the juſt vengeance of God, "who puniſhed him moſt deſervedly, by reaſon of the "execution he cauſed to be done on John, ſirnamed "Baptiſt, by putting him to death: a man who was

"re-

" repleniſhed with all virtue, and who exhorted the " Jews to addict themſelves thereto, and to execute " juſtice towards man, and piety towards God. Ex- " horting them to be baptized; telling them that bap- " tiſm ſhould at that time be agreeable unto God, if " they ſhould not only renounce their ſins; but if, " to the purity of their bodies, they ſhould annex the " cleanneſs of their ſouls, repurified by juſtice: and " whereas it came to paſs that divers flocked and fol- " lowed him, to hear his doctrine, Herod feared leſt " his ſubjects, allured by his doctrine and perſwa- " ſions, ſhould be drawn to revolt: for it ſeems they " would ſubſcribe in all things to his advice. There- " fore he thought it better, (to prevent any ill con- " ſequence) to put him to death; than to expect ſome " ſudden commotion, which afterwards he might re- " pent of. Upon this ſuſpicion Herod cauſed him to " be bound, and ſent to the caſtle of Macheron, and " there he was put to death." (Vid. Lodge's Joſephus Antiq. book XVIII. chap. 7.) And in the ſame book (ch. 4.) relating to the rebellion of the Jews, againſt Pontius Pilate, who was at the ſame time governor of Judea, the ſame hiſtorian, has recorded, " At " that time was Jeſus, a wiſe man, (if it be lawful to " call him a man) for he was the performer of divers " admirable works, and the inſtructer of thoſe who wil- " lingly entertained the truth, and he drew unto him " divers Jews and Greeks to be his followers. This " was Chriſt, who being accuſed by the princes of our " nation before Pilate, and afterwards condemned to " the croſs by him, yet did not thoſe who followed him " from the beginning, forbear to love him, for notwith-

" ſtanding the ignominy of his death : for he appeared
" to them alive the third day after, according as the
" prophets had before teſtified the ſame, and divers
" divine wonderful things of him, and from that time
" forward the race of the Chriſtians, who have de-
" rived their name from him, hath never ceaſed."

This faithful Jewiſh hiſtorian was a diſintereſted author, therefore muſt be very reaſonably ſuppoſed to write nothing but truth, which agrees with the four Evangeliſts ; two of whom, viz. St. Matthew and St. John, were eye and ear witneſſes : the others, St. Mark and St. Luke, wrote what they had perfect knowledge of, from thoſe who were eye and ear witneſſes, St. Mark from St. Peter's mouth, he being the diſciple and companion of St. Peter. St. Luke, the beloved phyſician and companion of St. Paul, in the firſt four verſes of his goſpel, acquaints us with the reaſons which induced him to write, which were, becauſe divers perſons in that age, had imprudently and inconſiderately ſet upon writing of goſpels, without direction from the ſpirit of God, whoſe errors and miſtakes were to be corrected by a true narrative : this St. Luke declares he was able to make, having had perfect underſtanding and knowledge of the truth of thoſe things he was about to relate, partly by his familiarity with St. Paul, and partly by his converſation with the other apoſtles, who conſtantly attended the bleſſed Jeſus, and were eye and ear witneſſes of thoſe things that are the ſubject matter of his goſpel.

And in the three other goſpels of the evangeliſts there can be nothing of fallibility or uncertainty in them,

them, by reaſon they wrote nothing but what they either heard or ſaw themſelves; and what they heard, they received from thoſe that were eye and ear witneſſes of the matter of fact it contains:

Pleaſe to reflect, and conſider impartially and ſeriouſly, that theſe four hiſtorians had not the leaſt worldly intereſt or advantage to be anſwered by writing, publiſhing and propagating the goſpel of their deſpiſed lord and maſter Jeſus Chriſt; but on the contrary they were forewarned by him, that they ſhould be hated by mankind for his name's ſake, and be perſecuted and delivered up to the ſynagogue, and ſcourged, and ſent to priſon, and brought before kings and rulers.

Therefore he moſt tenderly cautions them, for to beware of men: "Behold (ſays he) I ſend you forth as "ſheep in the midſt of wolves: be ye therefore wiſe "as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves," Matt. x. 16. They were to provide "neither gold, nor ſilver, nor "braſs in their purſes; nor ſcrip for their journey; "neither two coats, neither ſhoes, nor yet ſtaves," Matt. v. 10. They were not commiſſioned by their lord and maſter to ſet out in the world for the reformation of mankind on any lucrative views, but quite the contrary; which they readily and chearfully embraced with magnanimity and fortitude, going through numberleſs fatigues and hardſhips, perſecutions, impriſonments and ſcourgings, and at laſt ſealed the truth of their goſpels with their blood; atteſting it by the ſacrifice of all that was near and dear to them, even their own lives.

Therefore the authenticalneſs of their writings muſt be out of all doubt with every upright, ſincere, unprejudiced mind, who attentively and thoroughly weighs all circumſtances concomitant. The propagation of the glorious goſpel of the bleſſed Jeſus, the benefits and advantages which accrue to mankind from his grand embaſſy; the tendency his moſt pure and holy doctrines has to make them happy in this world, and to qualify them to be meet partakers for unſpeakable glory and happineſs, "ſuch has eye hath not ſeen nor ear heard, "neither have entered into the heart of man, the "things which God hath prepared for them that love "him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. are arguments, one would think, ſufficient to convince any reaſonable mind of the truth of Chriſtianity.

At the auguſt proclamation of the bleſſed Jeſus's nativity, the harmleſs ſhepherds were ſtruck with a pannic at ſuch a ſudden viſit of the heavenly meſſenger, attended with ſuch brilliancy, who ſaid unto them, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of "great joy, which ſhall be to all people, for unto "you is born this day, in the city of David, a Sa-"viour, which is Chriſt the Lord," Luk. ii. 9, 10, 11. "At which joyful occaſion immediately a multitude of "the heavenly hoſt joined chorus, praiſing God, and "ſaying, "Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth "peace, good-will towards men," ver. 13, 14. Soon after the inhuman tyrant, bloody king Herod, apprehended that he was born, he endeavoured to have him murdered by a general maſſacre, which he cauſed to be executed

executed on all the children that were in Bethlehem, " and in all the coaſts thereof, from two years old and " under," Matt. ii. 16. So likewiſe the hypocritical magiſtrates and ſuperſtitious high prieſts with great rage and malice did all in their power to ſtifle Chriſtianity in its dawn, which evidently appears in the following ſacred hiſtory, as recorded in Acts iv. 6 to 13. which I earneſtly recommend to your examination, it containing undeniable evidences of the veracity of the Chriſtian religion. For if theſe narratives had been ſpurious, worldly power and policy would have detected and ſuppreſſed them: " but all things muſt be fulfilled " which were written in the law of Moſes, and in the " prophets, and in the pſalms concerning him," Luke xxiv. 44.

Therefore the angel of the Lord proclaimed his name Jeſus, becauſe he was to ſave his people from their ſins. Agreeable thereto, as a preparatory for this moſt gracious deſign, John the Baptiſt, as a preſage, preached repentance, baptiſing thoſe who confeſſed their ſins, Matthew iii. 2. 6. Declaring to them, " he " only baptized them with water unto repentance, " but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, " whoſe ſhoes I am not worthy to bear; he ſhall bap- " tiſe you with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire," Matthew iii. 11.

When the ſelf-conceited ſuperſtitious Phariſees ſaw that the bleſſed Jeſus did not diſdain and reject the company of publicans and ſinners, they aſked his diſciples the meaning of it: on which he diſcovered a moſt friendly

good

good diſpoſition, aſſuring them, " he came not to call " the righteous, but ſinners to repentance," Matth. ix. 13. that is, his buſineſs was to act as a wiſe, ſkilful phyſician, to endeavour the cure of thoſe who were really ſpiritually ſick. " They that be whole need not a " phyſician, but they that are ſick, ver. 12.

In his moſt excellent ſermon on the mount he informed his auditory, that he would by no means have them to imagine he came to diſannul any moral obligation, or ſet aſide any of the predictions of the holy prophets, but to compleat them, and to give mankind more exalted ideas of the moral precepts, then what was generally underſtood to be implied in them, by thoſe who regarded principally the letter, or ritual part of them.

The bleſſed Jeſus always undeceived hypocritical pretenders to religion, aſſuring mankind, " That except " their righteouſneſs ſhould exceed the righteouſneſs of " the ſcribes and phariſees, they ſhould in no caſe enter " into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. v. 20. and that " not every one that ſaith unto him Lord, Lord, ſhall " enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth " the will of his father which is heaven, Matt. vii. 21. " For the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath " appeared to all men, teaching us that denying un- " godlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, " righteouſly and godly in this preſent world, look- " ing for the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearing of " the great God and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who gave " himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all ini-

" quity,

" quity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zea-
" lous of good works," Titus ii. 11, 12, 13, 14. For as
" he which hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy in all
" manner of converſation, 1 Peter i. 15. Therefore
" mankind is precautioned of receiving any miſrepre-
" ſentation of the goſpel of Chriſt. Let no man de-
" ceive you, he that doeth righteouſneſs, is righteous,
" even as he is righteous. He that committeth ſin is of
" the devil; for the devil ſinneth from the beginning;
" for this purpoſe the ſon of God was manifeſted that
" he might deſtroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 7,
" 8, that through death, he might deſtroy him that
" had the power of death, that is the devil, and deli-
" ver them who through fear of death were all their
" life-time ſubject to bondage, Heb. ii. 14. 15. where-
" fore as by one man ſin entered into the world, and
" death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed on all men, for
" that all ſinned, Rom. v. 12. That as ſin hath reigned
" unto death, even ſo might grace reign through righ-
" teouſneſs, unto eternal life by Jeſus Chriſt our lord,
" ver. 21. Who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life
" and immortality to light through the goſpel, 2 Tim.
" i. 10. For this corruptible muſt put on incorruption,
" and this mortal muſt put on immortality: ſo when
" this corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and
" this mortal ſhall have put on immortality, then ſhall
" be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, Death
" is ſwallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy ſting?
" O grave, where is thy victory? the ſting of death
" is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks
" be to God which giveth us the victory through our
" lord Jeſus Chriſt," 1 Cor. xv. 53 to 58. Thus

death

death is ſubdued, overcome and conquered, and life and immortality brought to light by the goſpel. Therefore you muſt acknowledge, that if you believed theſe declarations to be of divine authority, you would think them very comfortable, glorious, beneficial diſcoveries indeed, as they graciouſly point out a moſt admirable method to extricate mankind from their ſins, and to obtain the favour of God, and free them from the fear of death, removing its moſt dreadful ſting; thereby giving them a right and title to heaven victoriouſly through our lord Jeſus Chriſt; which is an infinitely greater conqueſt than all the heathen philoſophers pretended to, or even had any idea of.

If you think juſtly, you muſt be ſenſible that mere natural religion is very deficient in theſe moſt important concerns. How you ſhould get above the fears of death; how the Deity will be appeaſed for your ſins; whether happineſs or miſery will be the portion of your immortal ſouls.

You know the wiſeſt men among the heathens diſcovered but a very faint glimmering light, which now and then darted out from their moſt abſtracted reaſonings.

If you are ſincere and honeſt, yon will acknowledge that natural religion has received great advantage by the moonlight of Moſes and the prophets, and the ſunſhine of Chriſt and his apoſtles: therefore let me beſeech you not to deceive your own ſouls, vainly imagining that reaſon has not been enlightened by revelation.

Well

Well might St. Paul ſay, " That this is a faithful " ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus " Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners," 1 Tim. i. 15.

How inſignificant and taſtleſs are all the refined diſcoveries of philoſophy, compared to this ſingle divine declaration! Therefore St. Paul came to an excellent determination, built on a ſolid foundation, " Not to know any thing ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. Chriſt crucified will be the divine theme, which victorious ſouls will be contemplating on to all eternity. This cures the ſoul of all its maladies and diſtempers: other knowledge makes mens minds flighty, giddy and unſteady: this ſettles and compoſes them. Other knowledge is apt to ſwell mankind with high conceits and opinions of their own abilities: this brings them to the juſt apprehenſion of themſelves, makes them meek and lowly in heart. Other knowledge leaves mens hearts as they found them; This changes them and makes them better.

Such a tranſcendent excellency is there in the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our lord. Therefore good old Simeon, as ſoon as he ſaw him, proclaimed God's ſalvation, who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, by diſcovering to them righteouſneſs and true holineſs, and to be the glory of the people Iſrael.

If you will carefully examine the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel, you will find them to have a ten-

dency to make mankind comfortable in this life, and to render them compleatly happy after death. Read the New Teſtament with a candid diſpoſition, and you will find throughout the whole, that both the affirmative and negative precept have this tendency; the affirmative commanding holineſs in general, inculcating one or more particular virtues or habits, or means and helps to the acquiring, ſupporting or increaſing them; ſuch as reading, hearing the word of God, prayer, meditation, a good conſcience, watchfulneſs againſt temptations, avoiding the occaſions of evil.

The negative precepts of the goſpel do forbid the contrary, to ſome or other of thoſe duties either directly or indirectly, immediately or mediately, in its own nature, or by reaſon of ſome circumſtance, to the depravation of our ſouls in rendering us wicked, or in ſome degree or other leſs holy; for there is not any thing in itſelf in all reſpects innocent or harmleſs that is forbidden; and there is not one thing commanded, that is not upon its own account, or ſome one or other account, greatly for our advantage, ornamenting human nature, raiſing its dignity towards her original rectitude, even to the higheſt degree of perfection.

If theſe aſſertions are true, which I will ſoon demonſtrate to every rational mind, you muſt acknowledge the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus comes from God only, becauſe God is the origin of all goodneſs; who is goodneſs itſelf, all perfection; conſequently any diſcovery which hath a tendency to promote godlikeneſs in any of his reaſonable creatures, who were originally made after

after his own likeneſs, muſt neceſſarily come from him; conſequently it muſt be well pleaſing to him that all his reaſonable creatures attend to it as his voice, and obey it as his command.

The clearer any diſcovery of the divine mind and will is communicated to mankind, a more near reſemblance of it muſt reaſonably, yea neceſſarily, be expected by him from us.

When one of the ſcribes perceived the bleſſed Jeſus anſwered the ſadduces, relating to the reſurrection ſo well, he enquired of him which was the firſt commandment of all. The bleſſed Jeſus informed him, the firſt of all the commandments is this: "Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou ſhall love the "Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, "and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength." This is the firſt commandment, and the ſecond is like, namely this, "Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." "There is none other commandment greater than theſe," Mark xii. 28 to 35. To love God with all our heart, with all our ſoul, with all our mind, and with all our ſtrength, is to love him in the greateſt degree poſſible, and with every power, faculty and ability we are inveſted with. This is the firſt principle both of natural and revealed religion. The bleſſed Jeſus told the ſcribe the ſecond was like it, but did not ſay equal to it, though the duty is of the ſame authority, of the ſame need. For as no one can be ſaved without the love of God, ſo neither can any one be ſaved without the love of their neighbour: the ſupremacy of our love un-

doubtedly is due to God, and the greateſt fervency of all our affections, and our thoughts and deſires, ought ever to be towards him, our minds and underſtandings meditating on him, our wills voluntarily chooſing him, and delighting to obey him.

To love God ſupremely is to love him without any manner of reſtriction, above all degree, and is a duty of ſuch abſolute neceſſity, and ſo indiſpenſible, that he himſelf cannot exempt us from the obligation of it. So long as he is God, and we are dependent creatures, we ſhall always lie under a natural and neceſſary obligation to love and obey him.

This therefore is the greateſt commandment, and our higheſt duty. And we are certain that when faith ſhall be turned into viſion, and hope into fruition, that love to God will then be in its greateſt perfection, or be compleated in enjoyment.

To love our neighbour as ourſelves, is to be underſtood after the like manner that we love ourſelves; but not in the ſame degree, tho' with the ſame kind of love that we love ourſelves. As we love ourſelves freely and readily, ſincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly, compaſſionately, and conſtantly; ſo ſhould we love our neighbour alſo. Though we love him not as much as we love ourſelves, yet we ought to love him as truly as we love ourſelves. Therefore love to God, our neighbour, and ſelves, are things inſeparable.

There is no command in divine revelation which expreſſes a man ſhould love himſelf; for the light of nature

nature dictates, and the law of nature obliges every man so to do; it being an innate principle in him, planted by his Creator; and indeed self-love and self-preservation is a natural instinct in all creatures, peculiarly in mankind. But the sublimest of all the christian virtues and graces consists in universal goodness; a disinterested love and affection to all mankind in the greatest degree possible.

The complete and perfect pattern of this divine virtue is Christ himself, who, in his most incomparable sermon on the mount, instructed all those who were willing to become his real and genuine disciples, "to love "their enemies; to bless those that curs'd them; to do "good to them that hated them; to pray for them "which despitefully used them, and persecuted them," Matth. v. 44.

This is the refined religion of the blessed Jesus, and what he inculcated on all those who would become his disciples indeed. This is the sublime religion he practised, both living and dying, and in the most perfect manner possible.

Let me ask you now in the name of truth and goodness, does natural religion teach these godlike virtues and graces in the like manner? No, no. And besides, is there not too much of a dislike and aversion to them, in human nature?

How do you find yourselves disposed towards them? are these sublime doctrines consonant to your reason?

and does your reaſon inſtruct you to put them in practiſe?----Is it poſſible to learn this religion from the moſt refined maxims of the wiſeſt of mankind among the heathen philoſophers? No, no, you muſt acknowledge that all the moſt purified philoſophy in all ages of the world put together, could never have taught mankind to "love their enemies, to bleſs thoſe that "curs'd them; to do good to thoſe that hated them; "to pray for thoſe that deſpitefully uſed them, and "perſecuted them," Matth. v. 44.

I hope the eyes of your underſtandings begin now to be opened; and that you are ſenſible what infinite obligations mankind are under to the only begotten Son of God, the brightneſs of his Father's glory, the expreſs image of his perſon, and whom the angels worſhip.

That Deity ſhould humble himſelf ſo aſtoniſhingly as to take on him human nature, and become man, by being born of a poor virgin, and live on earth for a time, in order to propagate theſe glorious doctrines for the good and benefit of poor mortals, by his moſt excellent inſtructions and example! Let me earneſtly beſeech you, as reaſonable and accountable creatures, to hearken and attend to them. Liſten to thoſe inſtructions with that awfulneſs and ſolemnity, as you would if God ſpake vocally from heaven to you. Hark, God ſpeaks, "LOVE YOUR ENEMIES."

Here the inward affection of your ſoul is required, as well as the outward behaviour of common civility:

Bleſs

" Bleſs them that curſe you." There outward civility and affability is required, as well as inward affection. " Do good to them that hate you. Here all acts of kindneſs and real benefit, on every occaſion, are required of us, to be done to our moſt implacable enemies. " Pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſe- " cute you:" that is, ſuch perſons as may be poſſeſſed of the greateſt degree of enmity that can be, ſuch as includes malice, revenge and cruelty, of the moſt malignant kind poſſible, we are to ſhow no ill will towards them; but on the contrary ſuch a good will, as to pray ſincerely for them.

The bleſſed author of this ſublime religion not only proclaimed theſe heavenly divine doctrines to the ears of mankind, but exemplified them in his own practice, in the moſt perfect and complete manner, to his dying moment, even while his moſt inveterate and implacable enemies were murdering him, by putting him to the cruel, painful death of the croſs, nailing his bleſſed hands and feet thereto, piercing his ſacred ſide with a ſpear; letting out his moſt precious, invaluable blood, John xix. 34.

Notwithſtanding all this unparalelled and ſhocking barbarity, he cried out ſaying, " Father, forgive them, " for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. leaving us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps, " who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth. " Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when " he ſuffered he threatened not, but committed himſelf " to him that judgeth righteouſly: who his own

" ſelf bare our ſins in his own body on the tree, that " we being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs, " by whoſe ſtripes we are healed," 1 Pet. ii. 21 to 25.

Let us reaſon now on this moſt important, ſelf-intereſting ſubject. Can any of the human race that are in their ſenſes imagine, that this Jeſus of Nazareth was an impoſtor, a hypocritical wicked man? Was it poſſible for him, if he was not more than man, to encounter with ſuch diabolical malice, and bear ſuch cruelty with ſo much patience, long ſuffering, and goodneſs, as he did, even ſo as to pray for his very murderers? Surely fleſh and blood is not equal to this.

Reflect; conſider, if he was not that very perſon whom he ſo frequently declared himſelf to be, (" Chriſt " the ſon of the living God, who came forth from " the Father, and who thought it not robbery to be " equal with him, who dwelt in the Father, and the " Father in him") he muſt be the very vileſt of impoſtors, a blaſphemer in the higheſt degree poſſible. But your reaſon muſt inform you to the contrary. If you will ſincerely and thoroughly weigh all the circumſtances relating to his birth, life, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, you will have the higheſt reaſon to believe, that he was not only an exceeding good man, but Deity united to humanity; ſtrictly and properly God and Man. Therefore be no longer faithleſs, but believing.

In order to animate, and quicken, to encourage, and engage mankind to that moſt exalted, amiable duty

of

of loving their enemies, the bleſſed Jeſus propounds the example of God himſelf for their imitation, " who maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on " the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and unjuſt," Matt. v. 45. Therefore the bleſſed Jeſus muſt be underſtood to mean, by becoming the children of our heavenly father, his ſpiritual children by regeneration; that they may know and experience that they are his adopted children, by their likeneſs to him and imitation of him. For the very beſt evidence mankind can have of their being his ſpiritual children, is by their conformity to his moſt holy laws, particularly in thoſe brilliant properties of univerſal love and goodneſs, kindneſs and forgiveneſs.

We daily and hourly find that God doth good to them that live without him in the world; that is, who have him not in all their thoughts, unleſs it be with irreverence, when they blaſpheme, and take his moſt ſacred and holy name in vain, having not the fear of God. That neither pray to him, or praiſe him for any of his mercies, bleſſings, and comforts of life; though he is continually ſending them his enlivening beneficial ſun, and fruitful, refreſhing, cooling rain, and permitting them to enjoy perfect health and ſtrength, peace and plenty, faring ſumptuouſly every day: " yet they make gold their hope, and " have ſaid to the fine gold, thou art my confi- " dence; and rejoice becauſe their wealth is great, " and becauſe their hand have gotten much: who " are the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt, whoſe " end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, and

" whoſe

" whoſe glory is their ſhame; who mind earthly " things, Philip. iii. 18, 19. who deſpiſe the poor, James " ii. 6. Having reſpect to perſons," ver. 9. Therefore the bleſſed Jeſus gives a reaſon why chriſtians ſhould not be ſo mean-ſpirited as to confine their love to thoſe who only loved them, and be complaiſant and obliging to thoſe who were ſo to them. " If ye love " them which love you, (ſays he) what reward have ye? " Do not even the publicans the ſame; if ye ſalute your " brethren only, what do ye more than others? do " not even the publicans ſo?" Matt. v. 46, 47. As if the bleſſed Jeſus had ſaid, Heathens by the light of nature are inclined to love thoſe who love them, yea publicans, and even the very worſt of ſinners do ſo: but my religion inſtructs you in more noble and generous principles; " I ſay unto you love your ene- " mies." All mankind univerſally, without exception.

Love for love is only common juſtice, reciprocal civility; but love for no love is favour and kindneſs; and love for hatred and enmity, is divine goodneſs, a moſt glorious diſpoſition; godlikeneſs, which has a tendency to render mankind illuſtrious on earth, and glorious in heaven. Therefore this exalted religion is to be learnt only from the ſublime precepts of the goſpel.

But alas, alas, if we conſider all the denominations of chriſtians in every chriſtian country, as one community, to our grief and unſpeakable ſhame it muſt be acknowledged, little, very little of this God-like, Chriſt-like religion, is practiſed among the generality

nerality of thoſe who call themſelves by the holy and moſt venerable name of chriſtians; yea, even among many who make the higheſt profeſſions of it.

On the contrary, how frequently among ſuch is there to be found, luke-warm love, coldneſs and indifference, ſhyneſs and unſociableneſs, haughtineſs and pride, variance and ſtrife, enmity and hatred? yea even frequently amongſt relations and profeſſed friends; oftentimes occaſioned by a little miſunderſtanding of one another, each acting agreeable to their private ſentiments or judgment of things, and varying from each other, which is occaſioned by one cauſe or circumſtance or other, not knowable by each, and by perceiving and viewing of things in different lights, conſequently acting on different principles and motives; ſome through ignorance, ſome for ſelfiſh views, others for more generous views; ſome to pleaſe their fellow mortals, others to pleaſe Almighty God.

What a number of profeſſing chriſtians is to be found, who are ſo narrow ſpirited and mean, as to confine their love to little ſects and parties; and from thoſe unchriſtian ſprings flows that bitterneſs of ſpirit, which diſcovers itſelf by one party's uncharitable cenſures, and unchriſtian behaviour to the other.

The ill effects, for inſtance, of elections for repreſentatives in parliament in England, for moſt of our boroughs, towns, and cities, moſt lamentably teſtifies the truth of this obſervation.

If real chriſtian principles governed mankind, and a true catholic ſpirit reigned, (not a papiſt ſpirit) how happy would mankind in general find themſelves to what they now are! We ſhould then live heaven-like. For this cauſe, the bleſſed Jeſus has commanded us, " to be perfect even as our " Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. v. 48. That is, we ought to endeavour, to the very utmoſt of our power, to make all the chriſtian heroic virtues and divine graces compleat and perfect, in being very careful, in exerciſing of them minutely in every ſituation and circumſtance of life, ever having the honour and glory of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures at heart.

To be perfect as our heavenly father, in the ſtricteſt literal ſenſe, is impoſſible, as to degree and equality. " Behold, he putteth no truſt in his ſaints; yea " the heavens are not clean in his ſight, Job xv. " 15. And his angels he chargeth with folly," Job iv. 18. The original word rendered in St. Matthew's goſpel perfect, Matt. v. 48. is in St. Luke's goſpel rendered merciful, Luke vi. 36. denoting that charity is the very perfection of all chriſtian graces.

Thoſe who are by the rich favour and grace of God become perfect in love, are perfect in all divine graces in God's account. Therefore, in order to be a throughout compleat chriſtian, ſo as to obtain eternal ſalvation, we are to preſs forward toward the mark of perfection, " for the prize of the high

" calling

" calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus," Philip. iii. 14, 15. Becauſe the bleſſed Jeſus's religion demands of us not only holineſs in our words and actions, but alſo holineſs in our thoughts and affections, for all ſincere chriſtians are to " worſhip God in ſpirit and " in truth, for God ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him," John iv. 23. Therefore ſuch perſons as are poſſeſſed of a right frame and diſpoſition, both of heart and mind; their thoughts muſt be pure and holy, not cheriſhing or indulging any ſin; for the purity and ſpirituality of the law of Chriſt, condemns ſpeculative wantonneſs, equal with practical uncleanneſs, and forbids not only the outward action, but the ſecret purpoſe and intention, and firſt out-goings of the ſoul, after unlawful objects. For the bleſſed Jeſus has poſitively declared, " that whoſoever looketh on a woman to " luſt after her, hath committed adultery already with " her in his heart," Matt. v. 28. He has alſo pronounced malice equal to murder, and coveting and defrauding, and an inordinate love to this world's goods, equal to the ſin of procuring them by unjuſtifiable means; therefore the bleſſed Jeſus has commanded us, " that if our right eye or right " hand offend us, to pluck it out, and cut it off," Matt. v. 29, 30. Which words cannot, by any reaſonable mind, be underſtood in the literal ſenſe of the expreſſion, as if the bleſſed, tender-hearted, compaſſionate Jeſus had commanded us to deſtroy our bodily members, which are ſo uſeful and beneficial, to render our lives comfortable, and indeed ſo neceſſary to ſo many millions, that they could not get their bread by

by the ſweat of their brow, without the uſe of them. Therefore we muſt underſtand theſe our bleſſed Lord's commands in a ſpiritual ſenſe, which is to mortify the luſt of the fleſh, and the luſt of the eye, which otherwiſe will prove a very dangerous ſnare to the ſoul. When therefore we find the view of an enſnaring object will inflame us, we muſt make "a covenant with our eyes," Job xxxi. 1. ſo as not to look on it, which will anſwer the ſame end as if our eyes were out.

The ſureſt and ſafeſt method mankind can take, in order to be kept from the outward act of ſin is, (through the grace of God) to mortify their inward affections and love to it, which would be an infallible method of deſtroying of it in the root, before it ſprings up; and when our inward affections are mortified, and we have an abſolute averſion to vicious inclinations, the organs of our bodily ſight, and the uſe of our limbs may be preſerved, by reaſon they will be no longer weapons of ſin, but inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto holineſs. Therefore a ſedate, ſober, thinking mind, will acknowledge that there is a great deal of reaſon or cauſe why their very thoughts and inward workings of their mind, ſhould be under ſome laws and reſtraints.

Diſorderly, wicked thoughts and affections, are the immediate corrupters of our natural faculties; therefore it is equally requiſite, in order for mankind to become holy, that their thoughts ſhould come under ſubjection, as well as words and actions. The bleſſed Je-

ſus

ſus having aſſured us, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh; "that a good man, "out of the good treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth "good things, and an evil man, out of the evil trea- "ſure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things," Matt. xii. 34, 35. The heart could not receive it, unleſs the thoughts conveyed it. Therefore it is extremely evident, that reſtraints againſt wicked words and actions would be of little or no ſervice, if mankind was left at liberty as to their thoughts and affections. For inſtance, would it not be of little or no ſignification to command mankind not to do evil, if it was lawful for them to think of evil, and ſo be induced to the love of it? The thoughts of ſin may be very ſignificantly compared to a ſpark of fire, which if not immediately extinguiſhed, but nouriſhed, will ſoon burſt out in a flame: from the abundance of the heart the mouth will ſpeak, and very frequently cauſe the eyes, hands, and feet to act.

If you believed in divine revelation, the infallible declarations of the holy ſpirit, I could give you ſome excellent ſpiritual counſel deduced from thence, which would be a happy means of putting you in poſſeſſion of good thoughts and deſires, and to extricate evil ones. Being now extremely willing that you all ſhould embrace the word of God, and become real chriſtians, the diſciples indeed of the bleſſed Jeſus, I will lay before you a few choice maxims exceeding well worth your notice and obſervation, for the happy government of your thoughts, words, and actions;

actions; which is, to follow the example of the royal penitent, holy David, a man after God's own heart, Acts xiii. 22. Who made a resolution, " to take " heed to his ways, that he sinned not with his " tongue, by keeping his mouth with a bridle, " Psalm xxxix. 1. Who delighted in God's statutes, " and forgot not his word, Psalm cxix. 16. That " he thought on his ways, and turned his feet un- " to his testimonies, and made haste and delayed " not to keep his commandments, ver. 59, 60. O " how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the " day. Thou, through thy commandments, hast made " me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with " me, ver. 97, 98. Thy word is a lamp unto my " feet, and a light unto my path, ver. 105. I hate " vain thoughts, but thy law do I love, ver. 113. " Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; " yea, above fine gold; therefore I esteem all thy pre- " cepts concerning all things to be right; and I " hate every false way, ver. 127, 128. Thy word " is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it, ver. " 140. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that " I might meditate in thy word, ver. 148. Thy " word is true from the beginning, and every one " of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever, ver. " 160. I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I " love. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because " of thy righteous judgments. Great peace have they " which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them, " ver. 163, 164, 165. For blessed is he whose de- " light is in the law of the Lord, and in his law

" doth

" doth he meditate day and night; for he ſhall be " like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that " bringeth forth his fruit in ſeaſon; his leaf alſo ſhall " not wither, and whatſoever he doeth ſhall proſper." Pſalm i. 2, 3. If you will exerciſe your thoughts as the royal Pſalmiſt did, and delight to meditate on the word of God, " your thoughts will be eſtabliſhed, Prov. xvi. 3.

The purity and excellency of the bleſſed Jeſus's religion requires of us not only good thoughts, words and actions, but that we ſhould think, ſpeak and act from good principles; " not as pleaſing men, but God, " which trieth our hearts," 1 Theſſ. ii. 4. Therefore " whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, to " do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. Not hav- " ing men's perſons in admiration, becauſe of advan- " tage, Jude xvi. But in any wiſe to rebuke our neigh- " bour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him, Lev. xix. 17. " That every man may pleaſe his neighbour for his " good to edification," Rom. xv. 2.

But the faſhionable way of the world is to pleaſe their neighbour, if it is to their hurt; eſpecially if they poſſibly can receive the leaſt benefit and advantage thereby: not ſeeking their wealth, but their own; not ſeeking them but theirs, directly oppoſite both to the command and example of St Paul, recorded 1 Cor. x. 24. 2 Cor. xii. 14. The author of the Hebrews has directed us to " conſider one another; " to provoke unto love and good works," Heb. x. 24. To conſider one another, is to be underſtood to watch over one another. This exhortation reſpects both the virtues and vices mankind are ſubject to, and

likewiſe their temptations and dangers; which temptations and dangers ſhews the neceſſity of all thoſe mutual duties of warning, exhorting, and admoniſhing one another.

It is very much to be lamented that theſe beneficial duties are ſo generally neglected, and indeed almoſt loſt amongſt chriſtians; and with them the vital part, the glory of the chriſtian religion, departed from us. This is required of the diſciples indeed of the bleſſed Jeſus, as we may learn from Philip. ii. 4. and Heb. x. 24. That the conſideration, obſervation, and mutual watch of chriſtians over each other, and alſo exhortation and encouragement unto goſpel duties, is neceſſarily required as a ſpecial means for their preſervation in the true chriſtian faith.

The duty commanded is to provoke, and be provoked, unto love and good works: for that is no true evangelical faith, which is ſeparated from love: and that is no true love that is ſeparated from any acts of kindneſs, benevolence, and doing good on all occaſions when opportunity preſents, eſpecially to the houſhold of faith, Gal. vi. 9, 10. The grand end of chriſtian communion was intended to excite and ſtir up to love, which ought to be the glorious ſpring, and uncorrupted fountain of all good works, it being the genuine fruit and effect of our unfeigned love to God. This is to act from right principles and motives; to make the honour and glory of God our grand aim, our ultimate end in all our deſires and wiſhes, in all our intentions and determinations, in all our words and actions.

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A real chriſtian will perform all his natural actions to ſpiritual purpoſes, for ſpiritual ends: he will not only be very thankful while he is refreſhing his body with his daily food; but he will have an eye, that by thoſe bleſſings of refreſhment he may be ſtrengthened and enabled thereby for ſerving of God, both with his body and ſpirit, in all the actions of human life, becauſe he well knows, that to do all to the honour and glory of God, as he is inſtructed, is applicable to every kind of action. Therefore St. Peter hath commanded chriſtians, " to gird the loins of their mind, " to be ſober, and hope to the end, for the grace that " is to be brought unto them by the revelation of " Jeſus Chriſt, as obedient children, not faſhioning " themſelves, according to the former luſts in their " ignorance, but as Chriſt, which hath called them " is holy; ſo they are to be holy in all manner of " converſation, becauſe it is written, be ye holy, for I " am holy," 1 Peter i. 13 to 17.

Chriſtians are not only to make God the pattern of their holineſs, but the grand motive to it, he being the perfection of holineſs.

The very firſt man God created was in his own likeneſs, reſembling him in purity and holineſs: but man ſoon diveſted himſelf of it, by diſregarding God's law, and thereby became the original cauſe of all the unholineſs in his poſterity; the fountain being corrupted, the ſtreams became polluted. " Doth the fountain ſend forth at the ſame place ſweet

" water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear " olive-berries? either a vine figs? ſo can no foun- " tain both yield ſalt water and freſh, Jam. iii. 11, 12. " Therefore all mankind by nature are corrupt, are all " together become filthy, Pſ. xiv. 1. 3. and therefore by " nature are the children of wrath," Eph. ii. 3. Which was the reaſon the bleſſed Jeſus told Nicodemus, " That " except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the king- " dom of God," John iii. 3. Therefore St. Paul aſſures us, that thoſe who are unconverted, " their underſtandings " are darkened, being alienated from the life of God, " through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their heart," Eph. iv. 18. Thoſe who have a vital faith in Chriſt, have put off, concerning the former converſation, " the old man " which is corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts, " and are renewed in the ſpirit of their mind; and " have put on the new man, which, after God, is " created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs," ver. 22, 23, 24.

True godlineſs is godlikeneſs; real holineſs is the conformity of our nature to the holy nature of God; the conformity of our lives to the will of God, which was the grand embaſſy of the bleſſed Jeſus's coming into the world, as very evidently appears by all his divine doctrines. Therefore every unprejudiced rational mind muſt acknowledge that there is ſuch an intrinſic value in them, which, if they were engraven on mens hearts, and practis'd in their lives, they would reſemble God in all his imitable perfections. And from hence it is exceeding clear and apparent, that the bleſſed

bleſſed Jeſus ſought the honour and glory of God, and not his own: for "he came down from hea- "ven not to do his own will, but the will of him "that ſent him; therefore the ſame is true, John vi. 38. "and no unrighteouſneſs is in him," John vii. 18.

When he told the Jews that the doctrine he delivered was not his own, (he muſt be underſtood to ſpeak as a man; for thoſe he was ſpeaking to looked on him no more than to be a mere man) his doctrine was not of his own inventing and deviſing, as a man: it was no contrivance merely of his own, becauſe he was commiſſioned by God, whoſe ambaſſador and great prophet he was. Therefore he preſcribed to mankind an infallible rule, whereby they might be certainly aſſured whether the doctrine he preached was from God or not; which was, that if any perſon endeavoured to do the will of God in the beſt manner they were capable of, according to their knowledge, they ſhould be convinced of the doctrine, and its truth. The bleſſed Jeſus's ſeeking the glory of God, and not his own, deſiring no applauſe of mankind, is an undoubted evidence and proof to every unprejudiced mind, that his doctrine was from heaven. He therefore muſt be true, and "no unrighteouſneſs in him," John vii. 18. Therefore be not faithleſs but believing.

Let me earneſtly beſeech you, with an honeſt upright mind, ſeriouſly to reflect on the whole tenor and deſign of his life and doctrines, and you will find them one continued ſeries of holineſs and goodneſs: travelling up and down the world, not in a pompous ſtation of life, but on the contrary, in a humble low condition,

very deſpicable in the ſight of the greateſt part of mankind: always doing good, either to the bodies or ſouls of men, without reſpect of perſons, rich and poor, good and bad, of any profeſſion or religion, without diſtinction.

If you will ſtrictly examine the moral or meaning of every parable and ſaying he uttered, you will find ſome one thing or other in each greatly conducing to inſtil holineſs and goodneſs into all whom he ever ſpoke to, readily and chearfully embracing every opportunity thereunto; even turning their wicked thoughts, their ill deſigned ſpeeches, for their edification and improvement, their profit and advantage.

Witneſs, when ſome of them interrupted him in his preaching, by telling him that his mother and brethren wanted to ſpeak to him, he anſwered and ſaid unto them, "Who is my mother, and who are my "brethren? and he ſtretched forth his hand towards "his diſciples, and ſaid, Behold my mother, and my "brethren: for whoſoever ſhall do the will of my "father which is in heaven, the ſame is my brother, "and ſiſter, and mother," Matth. xii. 47 to 50. which moſt graciouſly diſcovers to us, how exceeding dear to him obedient chriſtians are; and that he prefers his ſpiritual kindred before his natural.

Alliance by faith is much more valued by him than alliance by blood; conſequently ſpiritual regeneration bringeth mankind into a more honourable relation to Chriſt, than natural generation.

Witneſs

Witneſs alſo, when his diſciples had been diſputing one with another, who of them ſhould be greateſt in the kingdom of heaven, inſtead of upbraiding them for their needleſs ambitious enquiries about precedency and preheminence, which of them ſhould come to the higheſt dignity and honour, he makes uſe of this occaſion to inculcate the neceſſity of humility on them, and becoming children, and as free from ambition as thoſe who affected nothing of precedency or ſuperiority.

From whence we may learn, that thoſe who are dignified with church preferments, who have the greateſt titles of honour and profit, ought to be adorned with the loweſt degree of humility, and be ſenſible they are laid under the greateſt obligations to be the moſt eminently uſeful and ſerviceable in the promoting and encouraging of real vital religion.

The bleſſed Jeſus aſſures his diſciples, that "whoſoever ſhould receive a child in his name, receiveth him; and whoſoever ſhould receive him, receiveth him that ſent him; for he that was leaſt among them, the ſame ſhall be great," Luke ix. 48. That is, thoſe who have the moſt humbling thoughts of themſelves, and who diſcover it by their actions, in doing the moſt mortifying ſelf-denying deeds of kindneſs and goodneſs, in the ſmalleſt degree, to any of their fellow creatures, in the name and for the ſake of the bleſſed Jeſus, ſhall be valued by him and his father, as if it was done to them, Mark ix. 37. Luke ix. 48.

When a woman, out of a great zeal, lifted up her voice and ſaid unto him, " Bleſſed is the womb that " bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked," Luke xi. 27; he moſt graciouſly inſtructed her and the audience in the great privileges and bleſſings of thoſe who were favoured with divine revelation, which were much ſuperior to any other external advantages whatever; " Yea rather, (ſays our Lord) bleſſed are " they that hear the word of God, and keep it," ver. 28. that is, much more bleſſed are thoſe that bare him in their hearts by faith, who live his commandments.

The bleſſedneſs of an obedient believer is ſuperior to any advantages whatſoever.

When Martha interrupted him with a frivolous complaint with reſpect to her ſiſter, about the trifling concerns of this life, he very cordially reproved her for her over ſolicitude about worldly affairs, which were of little or no conſequence, reminding her of the abſolute neceſſity of caring for her precious and immortal ſoul, " the one thing needful," which her ſiſter had ſecured invincible, impregnable; " Martha, Martha, thou art " careful and troubled about many things, but one " thing is needful, and Mary hath choſe that good " part which ſhall not be taken from her," Luke x. 41, 42.

This teaches mankind that they ſhould be neither afraid or aſhamed of the diſpleaſure of any of their friends or acquaintance, to reprove their failings in the ſpirit

ſpirit of meekneſs, for their ſpiritual benefit and advantage.

No doubt Martha was an honeſt, well meaning, friendly woman, yea, a pious good woman, beloved of the bleſſed Jeſus, notwithſtanding ſhe is reproved by him.

He does not find fault with her for her good nature and generoſity, but for her over anxiouſneſs and carking care, her perplexity: that her affections were too much ſet on earthly enjoyments, infinitely inferior to her ſpiritual intereſt, to the neglect of the one thing needful, her ſoul.

When the ſuperſtitious phariſees made a great wonder at our Lord's not waſhing before dinner, he took an occaſion to reprimand them for their moſt abominable hypocritical outſide righteouſneſs, to their ſhameful neglect of moral rectitude and ſubſtantial goodneſs, which was of abſolute neceſſity; who told them, "They made "clean the outſide of the cup and the platters, but "their inward part was full of ravening and wickedneſs: they tythe mint and rue, and all manner of "herbs: the leſſer things, neglecting the eſſentials; "paſſing over judgment and the love of God. Theſe "ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other "undone," Matth. xxiii. 23.

Again, when one of his audience deſired him to ſpeak to his brother, to divide his temporal eſtate with him, he took the opportunity to diſcourſe againſt the prevailing ſin

ſin of covetouſneſs, diſſwading him from ſetting his heart on earthly riches, aſſuring him, the happineſs of man's life conſiſted not in the abundance which he poſſeſſed, but in the rational enjoyment of them, ſubſervient to ſpiritual purpoſes; they being of a very uncertain continuance, at the beſt of a periſhing nature: therefore he takes occaſion to diſcover to him the ill conſequence of placing any expectations of enjoyment and happineſs in them. The loſs of one ſingle breath fruſtrating all future expectations from them; therefore he counſels mankind principally to regard their grand intereſt, "Seek ye firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſ-"neſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you," Matt. vi. 33.

But the common way of the world is to be anxious and ſeek for the things of an earthly duration. They would be very eaſy and contented to ſeek worldly enjoyment, and to have heaven without ſeeking. But the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus gives mankind not the leaſt expectation of it, on thoſe conditions, but diſcountenances it. He inſtructs them to aſk, ſeek, and ſtrive with the greateſt aſſiduity, aſſuring them ſucceſs, Matt. vii. 7, 8.

And if mankind would be but in as good earneſt to get and ſecure heavenly riches, as they are temporary, by making religion and the ſalvation of their ſouls their firſt and chief care, they would be abſolutely certain of receiving "riches and honour; durable riches and "righteouſneſs," Prov. viii. 18. "A crown of glory, "that fadeth not away," 1 Peter v. 4. And in this world every neceſſary enjoyment would be added, as much

much as the wiſdom of God (who only knows) in what degree they are fit and convenient for them, Luke xii. 31.

When ſome who were in company with him had made ſome remarks on the dreadful and terrible calamity that befel the Galileans, he takes occaſion to precaution them againſt raſh judgment, and to intereſt them in the abſolute neceſſity and importance of repentance, warning them of the horrible conſequence which would attend the neglect of it, Luke xiii. 1, 2, 3.

When the bleſſed Jeſus honoured one of the phariſees to dine with him on the Sabbath, they who were his chief enemies, contrary to the rules of upright behaviour and converſation, and real goodneſs, narrowly watched him, in order to make the entertainment become a ſnare, hoping that he might do, or ſay, ſomething whereby they might accuſe him. The bleſſed Jeſus knew their ill deſign: however, it had not any influence on him, to prevent his good intentions to oppoſe their ſuperſtitious ſentiments of religion, for whenever he had an opportunity of undeceiving mankind, he had no regard to the diſapprobation of ſuperſtitious bigots, either with reſpect to time or place: therefore, agreeable to his wonted goodneſs and tender compaſſion, he took pity on one of their company, who laboured under a dropſical diſorder. After ſpeaking to the lawyers and phariſees, relating to the legality of performing cures on the Sabbath day, (who became ſullenly ſpeechleſs) he worked a miracle, and immediately healed him, neglecting no opportunity of doing

good,

good, however diſagreeable to hypocrites; expoſtulating with them on the reaſonableneſs of it, propoſing queſtions to them of a ſimilar nature, parabolical repreſentations, whoſe arguments were ſo exceeding clear and convincing, that they had nothing to reply, but continued ſullen and ſilent, which learns mankind that it muſt be well pleaſing to God, to do real acts of kindneſs, benevolence, and all poſſible good on the Sabbath, as well as on all other days.

The bleſſed Jeſus obſerving the generality of their company (at this entertainment of the phariſees) to be tinctured with pride by affecting precedency, he meekly inſtructed them in the amiable virtue of humility, making it very evidently appear that the conſequence of it would redound to themſelves, and be its own reward; and that emulation and pride would be their own downfall, Luke xiv. 1 to 12.

The excellent method which the bleſſed Jeſus preſcribes in order for mankind to attain real honour, both from God and man, is to have low, humble, ſelf-diffident thoughts of themſelves; to be ſenſible that all their underſtandings and knowledge; all their ſuperior abilities, are but what they have received, for which reaſon St. Paul directs chriſtians " in lowlineſs of mind, each to eſteem others better than themſelves," Philip. ii. 3. The wiſeſt of all mankind has aſſerted, " A man's pride " ſhall bring him low, but honour ſhall uphold the " humble in ſpirit," Prov. xxix. 23. and the bleſſed Jeſus told the phariſees, " Whoſoever exalteth himſelf " ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall

" be

" be exalted," Luke xiv. 11. He alſo directed the chief phariſees, that when they made an entertainment for their fellow creatures, in what manner to do it, ſo as it would be well-pleaſing to God, which was to invite poor hearts that ſcarcely knew what it was to fare ſumptuouſly all their life-time, viz. the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, who were real objects of ſympathy and compaſſion; which would be real goodneſs and godlikeneſs, becauſe the bleſſed Jeſus juſtly obſerves, it is not in their power to recompence again. Confining of feaſts to friends, brethren, kinſmen and rich neighbours, has no intrinſic goodneſs in it, for they are ſenſible they will invite again, and ſo return the obligation and ſeeming friendſhip. But as to the other poor ſouls, in their diſtreſſed circumſtances, it is out of their power to do it in this world: but their bleſſing will accompany their benefactors; for almighty God, their heavenly Father, who created all his good creatures for the uſe and benefit of mankind, will, at the grand and awful day of retribution, abundantly reward them for it, Luke xiv. 12 to 15.

Natural religion is very deficient in theſe refined moral doctrines, therefore we are infinitely obliged to the bleſſed Jeſus for them. For if all mankind, unbelievers and ſpeculative believers, would become real chriſtians, both high and low, rich and poor, kings on the throne to coblers in the ſtall, each one acting according to their different ſtations and ſituations in life, as preſcribed in the goſpel; this world would become (comparatively ſpeaking) a paradiſe, inſtead of a cage of unclean birds, as 'tis now. Peace and plenty

plenty, unity and concord, friendſhip and good neighbourhood, and univerſal happineſs would reign on the whole earth, in a degree as it does in heaven.

Then the potentates of the earth would cauſe " their " ſwords to be turned into plowſhares, their ſpears into " pruning hooks." Nation would not then lift up ſword againſt nation, neither have occaſion to learn war any more; agreeable to the court prophet's prediction, Iſa. ii. 4. " Every man then would ſit under his vine, " and under his fig-tree, none making of him afraid," Mich. iv. 4. Then " judgment would run down as " waters, and righteouſneſs as a mighty ſtream," Amos v. 24. Then " there would be no more hurling or " deſtroying in all God's holy mountain: for the earth " would be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the " waters cover the ſea," Iſa. xi. 9. Then " the earth " would yield her increaſe; and God, even our own " God, would bleſs us," Pſ. lxvii. 6.

If all mankind would imitate the behaviour of the bleſſed Jeſus, they would be bleſſings to each other, which was the original deſign of their great and good Creator, Preſerver and Redeemer.

O how ſweet and engaging, lovely and inviting was the temper, diſpoſition and behaviour of our bleſſed Lord when on earth! enough to ſoften and charm the moſt obdurate rugged heart.

He was one of eaſy acceſs, of the greateſt freedom and affability; of a moſt delightful excellent diſpoſition, quite oppoſite to moroſeneſs, churliſhneſs, and ill nature, always

always unaffectedly grave and ſerious; calm and ſedate, ſociable and converſible, benevolent and compaſſionate, merciful and good, to the higheſt degree of perfection.

Thoſe perſons who were frowned on by his diſciples, and looked upon as troubleſome and rude by them, were not ſo by him; but were moſt kindly liſtened to, and very affectionately received. Little children, as unwelcome as they were to them, were very tenderly embraced, and even bleſſed by him, Mark x. 13 to 17.

He was quite the oppoſite to a proud, haughty, diſdainful ſpirit; for when he was either invited to the houſes of the poor or the rich, the good or the bad, he very readily accepted their invitations; neither did he eſteem it as unbecoming his gravity and ſerioufneſs, to make one at a marriage entertainment; but was ſo exceeding good-natured and obliging as to perform a miracle, by converting water into wine for them after their own was exhauſted, and had well drunken, by way of a chearful glaſs, John ii. 1 to 11. From whence every ingenuous mind may learn, that the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus is neither ſevere nor auſtere: that it does not deny mankind to enjoy the bountiful productions of the earth, the good creatures of God, with delight and pleaſure, to gratify their ſenſes, ſo as they keep within bounds of moderation.

Therefore it is impoſſible that a rational mind ſhould figure out a more complete religion, to make man-

mankind comfortable in this world, and happy in the other, than Chriſt's; the ſublime religion of the bleſſed Jeſus.

All the creatures of God are to be enjoyed by mankind, and nothing to be refuſed, if received with thankful, grateful hearts, "they being ſanctified by "the word of God and prayer, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. All "Wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all "her paths are peace; ſhe is a tree of life to thoſe "that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that re-"taineth her," Prov. iii. 17, 18. which can only be learnt but by divine revelation.

When James and John, two of the bleſſed Jeſus's diſciples, with great rage deſired him to call for fire from heaven to conſume the Samaritans for their bruti ſh behaviour in refuſing him entertainment, with what mildneſs and gentleneſs did he rebuke them for their revengful diſpoſition, ſaying thus, "Ye know not "what manner of ſpirits ye are of, for the Son of man "is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them," Luke ix. 55, 56.

The candour and diſpoſition of the bleſſed Jeſus towards Peter, James and John, when they diſcovered by their behaviour ſuch great unconcernedneſs and indifference to him, when he was approaching the very blackeſt and moſt horrible of all hours (his crucifixion); and when he deſired them only to watch with him for a little ſpace of time, (while he retired to pray) yet could not prevail with them from ſleeping, though entreated by repeated ſollicitations.

Never-

Nevertheleſs, (ſo exceeding humane was he, as not to entertain any ill opinion of them) he only ſaid to them, "What, could ye not watch with me "one hour?" apologiſing for them, attributing it to their infirmity, and not to their wills; ſaying, "their "ſpirit was willing, but the fleſh was weak," Matth. xxvi. 40, 41. and notwithſtanding his threefold command to them to watch with him, they diſobeyed and fell aſleep, which, to every conſiderate mind, muſt appear very aggravating, under ſuch terrible circumſtances as the bleſſed Jeſus was then in. However, he did not in the leaſt reflect on them, but told them to ſleep on, and take their reſt, for his hour was at hand; that the Son of man would be betrayed into the hands of ſinners, Matth. xxvi. 45.

This admirable lenity and behaviour of the bleſſed Jeſus's to his diſciples inſtructs mankind always to put the very beſt conſtructions upon thoſe actions of their fellow-creatures, which are capable of other interpretations; yea, even if by outward appearance their conduct and behaviour almoſt evidence the truth of it.

When that deſpicable monſter, that villainous traytor Judas, (his hypocritical diſciple) had the unparalelled audaciouſneſs to accoſt him at the head of an armed multitude of miſcreant ruffians, one might have thought that that was aggravation ſufficient to have provoked Deity: but with what amazing mildneſs did he receive that ungrateful, diabolical miſſionary, who only ſaid to him, "Judas, betrayeſt thou the Son "of man with a kiſs?" Luke xxii. 48. And when

his diſciple Peter was ſo exaſperated as to draw his ſword, and cut off one of the ruffian's ears, who came to take him by force, he rebuked Peter, and commanded him to ſheath his ſword; and was ſo humane, compaſſionate and good, as to perform a miracle to reſtore the ruffian's ear, Luke xxii. 51.

With what inhuman villainous mockings, buffetings, ſpittings, did his blood-thirſty enemies afflict and torment him, by arraying him with a mock robe, a thorny crown, a reed ſcepter, and gave him to drink one of the moſt nauſeous of all draughts, gall diſſolved in vinegar, Matth. xxvii. 34. and ſoon after murdered him between two thieves, nailing his precious hands and feet to the croſs, lancing his dear ſide with a ſpear, ſpilling his invaluable blood; yet in the midſt of all this helliſh popiſh cruelties, he ſupplicated pardon for them, ſaying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what "they do," Luke xxiii. 34. Be aſtoniſhed, O heavens! and tremble, O earth! when thou doſt reflect on the barbarity and cruelty that was executed on the only begotten Son of God at his crucifixion; who never was, or ever could be (with truth) charged with ſin or folly, diſſimulation or hypocriſy, 1 Peter ii. 22.

What adorable patience and long-ſuffering did he diſcover even to the vileſt of mankind; what incomparable goodneſs has he manifeſted to the children of men! At his crucifixion he ſealed the truth of his doctrines with his moſt precious invaluable blood, and bleſſed thoſe that curſed him, doing good to them that hated him, and with his laſt breath prayed for thoſe who murdered him. Therefore, to the laſt moment of his life, he practiſed, in the moſt complete manner, what he preached

preached to others, Matt. v. 44. " leaving us an exam-
" ple, that we ſhould follow his ſteps," 1 Peter ii. 21.

His reſurrection from the dead undoubtedly proved him to be the Son of God with power; therefore we find the apoſtles frequently atteſting the truth of it; they themſelves being eye-witneſſes of it. " This " Jeſus (ſaith Peter) hath God raiſed up, whereof we " are all witneſſes," Acts ii. 32. He plainly and publickly told the Jews they preferred a murderer to him, and killed the " Prince of Life, whom God hath raiſed " from the dead, whereof they were witneſſes," Acts iii. 14, 15. And when Peter and John were commanded by the grand council at Jeruſalem not to ſpeak at all, or teach in the name of Jeſus, they did not heſitate a moment, but as chriſtian heroes courteouſly anſwered them, ſaying, " Whether it be right in the ſight of God to hearken " unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we can-" not but ſpeak the things which we have ſeen and heard," Acts iv. 19, 20. And when they reaſoned with the high prieſt and others, (the grand ſanhedrim) perſiſting in their duty, obeying God rather than man, declared unto them, " The God of their fathers raiſed up Jeſus, whom they " ſlew, and hanged on a tree; whom God had ex-" alted to be a prince and Saviour, for to give " repentance unto Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins; and " that they were witneſſes of theſe things, as alſo the " Holy Ghoſt, whom God hath given to them that " obey him," Acts v. 30, 31, 32. In which declaration is contained a two-fold evidence, which manifeſted the truth of what they ſpake to every unprejudiced mind; for they delivered nothing but what they themſelves were eye and ear-witneſſes to, and withal

atteſted it to be true by the power of the Holy Ghoſt in the miracles which were wrought by Chriſt and his apoſtles. Their preaching was rational and convincing to every unprejudiced mind; and the method they made uſe of tended to perſuade mankind of the truth of their goſpel, referring them to their underſtandings and conſcience. "Yea, and why even of yourſelves "judge ye not what is right?" Luke xii. 57.

Part of the conference which St. Peter had with Cornelius the centurion was, "That God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt, and with power; "who went about doing good, and healing all that "were oppreſſed of the devil; for God was with "him, and we are witneſſes of all things which "he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in "Jeruſalem: whom they ſlew and hanged on a tree, "him God raiſed up the third day, and ſhewed him "openly; not to all the people, but unto witneſſes "choſen before of God, even us, who did eat and "drink with him, after he roſe from the dead; and "he commanded us to preach unto the people, that it "is he which was ordained of God to be the judge "of the quick and the dead; to whom gave all the pro-"phets witneſs, that through his name whoſoever be-"lieveth ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins," Acts x. 38 to 44.

Theſe are rational and demonſtrable evidences of the truth of the facts relating to the crucifixion, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of the bleſſed Jeſus, atteſted by thoſe who were both eye and ear witneſſes; and who were the beſt able to make known the truth of them to a wicked, cenſorious, unbelieving world. For where the

the truth of a doctrine depends upon a matter of fact, the truth of that doctrine is ſufficiently manifeſted, if the matter of fact be evidently proved in the moſt rational and cleareſt manner it is capable of.

Thus it is in reference to the doctrine of Chriſt; the truth of it being interwoven with the truth of the whole hiſtory of our Lord; therefore if the facts relating to him be true, his doctrine muſt neceſſarily be divine; conſequently infallible, for if it be unexceptionably true (as it really is) that there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus, born at Bethlehem, who did ſo many miracles, and at laſt ſuffered the death of the croſs, and after he had lain almoſt three days in the grave, roſe again from the dead, and appeared to many inconteſtible witneſſes, ſuch as had no worldly views to anſwer by their atteſtation of it, but on the contrary ſuffered reproach and diſgrace, hatred, envy, and malice, ſcourges and impriſonment, perſecution, and even death itſelf; what ſhadow of reaſon can there poſſibly be to call in queſtion the teſtimony of this divine perſon Jeſus of Nazareth? Certainly there can be no reaſon; for there were the greateſt evidences which poſſibly could be to theſe matters of fact; for theſe diſintereſted men were both eye and ear witneſſes of it. Theſe facts were of ſuch a nature, that their ſenſes could not poſſibly be deceived, for Chriſt was made of fleſh and blood as well as themſelves; therefore they had as convincing evidences that they ſaw him, and converſed with him, and felt his fleſh, as any man in the world can be ſenſible they converſed, ſaw, and felt one of their own ſpecies, their fellow mortals, who is likewiſe made of fleſh and blood. Chriſt appeared openly to the world, and his miracles were not performed in ſecret, they were

real and viſible miracles; the truth of which he challenged even his enemies to gainſay. For "when "the high prieſt of the Jews asked Jeſus of his diſ- "ciples, and of his doctrine, Jeſus anſwered him very "plainly, viz, that he ſpake openly to the world; "that he ever taught in the ſynagogue, and in the tem- "ple, whither the Jews always reſorted, and in ſecret "that he ſaid nothing," John xviii. 19, 20.

The man who was born blind, and cured by our Saviour was known by rich and poor throughout the country to have been born blind, as atteſted by his parents; and as his blindneſs from his birth was publickly known, ſo alſo was his cure; which was declared by the man himſelf, on whom this grand miracle was wrought. and by his parents alſo; alſo to the hypocritical unbelieving phariſees, John ix. 9 to 35.

When the bleſſed Jeſus raiſed a dead corps, (the widow's ſon of Nain) it was done before numbers of perſons. Many who ſaw the miracle, or at leaſt ſome (in all probability) were preſent at his death, Luke vii. to xviii. Lazarus, who was well known to be dead four days, his reſurrection could not poſſibly be a deception, becauſe when our Lord ordered his grave-ſtone to be taken away, Lazarus immediately aroſe and came forth, in the preſence of them all.

The death, paſſion and reſurrection of the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf was an evidence of ſenſe, done in the preſence of his greateſt adverſaries. The ſoldiers themſelves were ſufficient witneſſes of his being really dead, when they came to break his bones, before he was taken down from the croſs, who did not do it, by reaſon they found him

him already dead, which they acknowledged. At his reſurrection the ſtone was rolled away from the ſepulchre, and no body found therein, although the ſepulchre was conſtantly guarded by ſoldiers, who ſhook, and became as dead men, at the earthquake, when the angel of the Lord deſcended from heaven, and came and rolled back the ſtone from the door of Chriſt's ſepulchre, Matth. xxviii. 2, 3, 4. And his very diſciples were alſo terrified and affrighted, and ſuppoſed they had ſeen a ſpirit, Luke xxiv. 37. therefore diſperſed themſelves up and down in ſeveral places, till the bleſſed Jeſus convinced them of the truth of his reſurrection. But after all, Thomas was not ſatisfied unleſs he put his hands in the holes of the bleſſed Jeſus's ſides, and ſaw in his hands the print of his nails; all which he did, and then acknowledged him to be his Lord and his God, John xx. 28.

The bleſſed Jeſus condeſcending to ſatisfy the incredulity of Thomas, and others of his diſciples, hath made it moſt evident, that the body which he aroſe from the grave in, was that very identical body which was crucified and laid in the ſepulchre.

The more ſuſpicious and incredulous the apoſtles themſelves were at firſt, the greater evidence is it, how far they were from any the leaſt deſign of impoſing upon the world by the doctrines they preached.

When many witneſſes concur ſo ſtrong in the ſame teſtimony, nothing can diſparage more the truth of a teſtimony, than the counter-witneſſes of ſuch who were preſent at the ſame time. But when all the witneſſes

fully agree, not only in the ſubſtance, but in all material circumſtances relating to it. This muſt appear to be a true and valid teſtimony to every thinking unprejudiced mind.

Now there is no real diſſention in any of the witneſſes who wrote the birth, life, miracles, death, reſurrection and aſcenſion of the bleſſed Jeſus. All of them atteſting the very ſame things, though they wrote at different times, different places, and on different occaſions. Yet there is no real difference in any one material or eſſential circumſtance of the whole hiſtory: not only his apoſtles, but numbers of people beſides, yea, many of his enemies, were witneſſes to moſt of the bleſſed Jeſus's miracles.

As for his reſurrection, it would be very ſtrange and unaccountable indeed, that five hundred perſons ſhould all agree in the ſame thing, if it was not true: therefore there is no reaſon to ſuſpect ſuch teſtimonies which are given by eye and ear witneſſes, without queſtioning their knowledge of the things they relate, or their fidelity in relating them.

Now there is not the leaſt ground to doubt of either of theſe, in reference to thoſe perſons who gave teſtimony to the world concerning the perſon and actions of the bleſſed Jeſus, for they were ſuch as were intimately converſant both with his perſon, life and behaviour, and whom he had choſe and trained up for that very end, that they might be ſufficiently qualified to acquaint the world with the truth of things concerning himſelf, after his reſurrection from the dead: and accordingly

cordingly they followed him up and down the world wherever he went: they were alſo with him in his ſolitude and retirements, and thereby had an opportunity of ſeeing all his actions, and to obſerve the unſpotted innocency of his life.

Some of them were with him in his transfiguration, others in his agony and bloody ſweat, and they heard the expreſſions which came from his mouth; in all which he diſcovered a moſt wonderful ſubmiſſion to the will of God, and a great readineſs of mind to ſuffer for the good of mankind: the means they had of knowing the truth relating to the bleſſed Jeſus cannot therefore be reaſonably queſtioned, neither their fidelity in reporting what they knew.

The truth of the doctrines they preached wrought ſo far upon themſelves, that they parted with all their worldly comfort and ſubſiſtence for the ſake of it. Although their worldly ſubſtance were not great, yet they left their all, what was near and dear to them, their houſes, their wives and children, for Chriſt, and that not in order to gain any higher preferment in this world, but quitted an eaſy and quiet life, for one moſt troubleſome and dangerous: and it is to be admired with what readineſs and chearfulneſs they all underwent diſgraces and perſecutions, nay, the moſt cruel and ſhocking deaths, for the truth of the goſpel. Therefore it cannot be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that ever men ſhould be ſo prodigal of their eaſe and lives, as to throw both of them away, for teſtifying ſuch things, which themſelves were not fully aſſured of the truth of.

Would

Would it not be the higheſt folly imaginable, to have deceived themſelves in an affair of ſo great moment to them as the truth of that doctrine which they preached? eſpecially as all their hopes and happineſs depended on it, even to all eternity; "who declared themſelves to "be the moſt miſerable of all perſons, if their hopes "was to be confined only to this preſent life," 1 Cor. xv. 19.

Can we now think that any, who had the common reaſon of men, would part with all the contentments of this world, and expoſe themſelves to continual hazards, and at laſt readily undergo death itſelf, for the ſake of ſomething which was but the fiction of their own brains? What ſhould cauſe them to be ſo ſedulous and induſtrious in preaching ſuch things, that they could ſay, neceſſity was laid upon them, "yea, woe was to them if "they preached not the goſpel," 1 Cor. ix. 16. and alſo when they ſaw and experienced ſuch difficulties and troubles in preaching of it, had there not been ſome more powerful attractive in the beauty and excellency of the doctrine they preached, than any could be in the eaſe and tranquillity of the world.

Thus we evidently ſee the fidelity of the apoſtles manifeſted in ſuch a way and manner, as no other witneſſes were ever yet willing to hazard their lives for.

And therefore Origen juſtly condemns Celſus (a heathen philoſopher) of a very ridiculous impertinency, when

when he would have parallelled the relations of Herodotus and Pindarus, concerning Ariſteus Proconneſius, with thoſe of the apoſtles concerning Chriſt; for ſaith he, did either of theſe two venture their lives upon the truth of what they writ concerning him, as the apoſtles did to atteſt the truth of what they preached concerning our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt? L. 3. C. Celſum, p. 127.

The faithfulneſs of the apoſtles appears in their manner of reporting the things which they delivered, for there ever may be ſomething gathered from the manner of expreſſion, concerning the particular temper and diſpoſition of the perſons from whom it comes.

We may certainly read the greateſt fidelity in the apoſtles, from the peculiar manner of their expreſſing themſelves to the world, which they do with the greateſt impartiality, not declaring only what was glorious and admirable to the world, but what they knew would be accounted fooliſhneſs by it.

They who had only ſought to have been admired for the rare diſcoveries which they brought to the world, would be ſure to conceal every thing which might be accounted ridiculous; but the apoſtles fixed themſelves principally on what was moſt contemptible in the eyes of the world, and what they were moſt mocked and derided for; and that which they delighted moſt in the preaching of, was the croſs of Chriſt.

St.

St. Paul was ſo much in love with this moſt glorious topick, (which was a ſtumbling block to the Jews, and fooliſhneſs to the Greeks) that he valued the knowledge of nothing elſe in compariſon of Chriſt, and him crucified: "God forbid (ſays he) that I ſhould glory, ſaving the croſs of Chriſt." Philip. iii. 8. Gal. vi. 14.

I ſincerely aſk you in the name of truth, what ſhould be the reaſon that they ſhould rejoyce in that moſt, which was moſt deſpicable to the world, amongſt all ranks and orders of men, and for which they ſuffered ſo much, had not they ſeen far greater truth and excellency in it, of infinitely more value than the moſt ſublime ſpeculations concerning God and the ſouls of men, in the ſchool of Plato, or any other heathen philoſopher.

That all mankind ſhould be obliged, in order to obtain ſalvation, to believe in one who was crucified without the gates of Jeruſalem, was a very ſtrange doctrine to the unbelieving world, and is to this hour.

If the apoſtles had artfully ſuited their doctrines to the ſchool of Plato, what fame might they have gained among the heathen philoſophers? an univerſal fame they would have met with, and have had numbers of followers more than they had: and if they favoured the vices of mankind, we ſhould at this day have few, if any, profeſſing unbelievers.

If, in general terms, they had diſcovered of the benignity of the divine nature, and the manifeſtations of the goodneſs of God in the world, and repreſented that he was all merciful, and therefore all mankind muſt be neceſſarily happy in a future world. And in order

order to qualify mankind to participate of the divine nature, the perfect idea of true goodneſs, and the expreſs image of the perſon of God, the reſplendency of his glory, had vailed himſelf in human nature, and had every where ſcattered ſuch beams of light and goodneſs, as warmed and invigorated the frozen ſpirits of mankind with higher ſentiments of God and themſelves, and raiſed them up above the flatulency of this terreſtial matter to breathe in a purer air, and converſe with more noble objects, and ſo by degrees to fit the ſouls of mankind for thoſe more refined illapſes of real goodneſs, which might always ſatisfy the ſoul's deſires, and yet be always keeping them up, till the ſoul ſhould be ſunning itſelf to all eternity, under the immediate beams of light and love; and that after this incarnate Deity had ſpread abroad the wings of his love for a while upon this lower world, till by his gentle heat and incubation he had quickened the more tractable part of mankind to ſome degree of a divine life: he then withdrew himſelf back again into the ſuperior world, and put off that vail by which he made himſelf known to thoſe who are here confined to the priſon of their bodies. I ſay, ſuch doctrines as theſe would have better ſuited the taſte of the generality of mankind.

Had the apoſtles regarded applauſe among the famous philoſophers of the heathens, who were ſo very much admired in the age they lived in, and even now to this day among many unthinking, gay, flighty libertines, who prefer their maxims and writings to thoſe of Chriſt and his apoſtles, or any other, relating to that grand and important affair; the redemption of mankind,

kind, in and through the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. How eaſy had it been for them to have made very conſiderable additions to the moſt lofty and ſublime ſpeculations they had attained to, eſpecially if they had omitted ſo mean and contemptible a doctrine as the curſed croſs, the ſufferings and death of the Son of God? but this they were ſo far from, that the main thing which they preached to the world was the inſufficiency and vanity of all human wiſdom and learning, without the knowledge of Chriſt, and the neceſſity of all mankind's believing in, and relying on Jeſus of Nazareth, who was crucified, in order to ſave mankind from the wrath to come.

The apoſtles indeed diſcovered very much, infinitely more than the moſt lofty Platoniſt could do, concerning the goodneſs and love of God to mankind; which was, that "he gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever "believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." John iii. 16. "And that herein was "the love of God manifeſted, that while we were "yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us," Rom. v. 8. And that this was the greateſt truth, "and worthy of all "acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world "to ſave ſinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. They never dreamt of any divine goodneſs, which ſhould make mankind happy, without a ſaving intereſt in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. No, no, it was their deſign to perſuade mankind, that all the communications of God's goodneſs to the world, were wholly in and through him, alledging, that "there is none other name under heaven "given among men, whereby they muſt be ſaved." Acts iv. 12. And it is impoſſible any rational mind

ſhould

ſhould judge otherwiſe, unleſs they imagine Plato was a greater favourite of heaven, and knew more of the mind and will of God than the bleſſed Jeſus; and that the Platoniſts had greater revelations from heaven than St. Paul.

Is it reaſonable to believe the apoſtles would hazard their own reputation, and be accounted babblers, fools and madmen, for preaching the way of ſalvation to be only attainable in and through a perſon crucified between two thieves, had they not been convinced, not only of the truth, but importance of it, and that it concerned mankind as much to believe it, as it did to avoid eternal miſery?

Let me aſk you a ſerious queſtion, Did St. Paul preach ever the leſs the words of truth and ſoberneſs, becauſe he was told to his face that his learning had made him mad? who aſſured them, "if he was ſo, it is to "God," 2 Cor. v. 13. And pray what great wonder was it, if the love of Chriſt in the apoſtles ſhould make them ſo willing and chearful to loſe their reputation among the unthinking and prejudiced, obſtinate, wicked part of mankind, for that dear God-Man, "who was the way, the truth and the life, and by "whom alone they muſt find acceptance with God," John xiv. 6. "and count all things but loſs, for "the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus their "Lord; for whom they ſuffered the loſs of all things, "and counted them but dung, that they might win "Chriſt," Philip iii. 8. "That this mind might "be in them, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus, who be-

"ing

" ing in the form of God, thought it not robbery to " be equal with God, but made himſelf of no reputa- " tion, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and " was made in the likeneſs of man, and being found " in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and be- " came obedient unto death, even the death of the " croſs." Philip. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8. Therefore the apoſtles were not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, on any conſideration whatſoever; becauſe they knew it was the power of God to ſalvation, to every one that believeth, 1 Peter i. 5.

Neither in their preachings or their writings would they omit any of thoſe paſſages relating to our Saviour's death, though they were accounted the moſt diſhonourable to his perſon; which is certainly as great an evidence of their fidelity, as any unprejudiced reaſonable mind can expect: and this made Origen to ſay, the diſciples of Chriſt wrote all things with a great deal of candour and love of truth, not concealing from the world thoſe paſſages of the life of Chriſt, which would be accounted moſt fooliſh and ridiculous.

Impoſtors and deſigning men caſt a miſt of many dark and cloudy words before their hearers, but when once they are detected and brought to open light, their vizards fall off, and their deformity appears. Such perſons take delight in ſwerving quite out of the apprehenſion of thoſe who follow them, and never think themſelves better recompenced for their pains, than when they are moſt admired and leaſt underſtood: but never was chriſtianity more diſhonoured, than when men

men turned it from its native ſimplicity and plainneſs, into a number of cloudy and inſignificant expreſſions, which are ſo far from making men better underſtand the truth of it, that it was certainly the devil's helliſh deſign (by ſuch obſcure terms) to make way for a myſtery iniquity; and ſoon after we ſaw and found the effects of it in an oracle ſet up at Rome inſtead of Delphos, and all the pretence of it was the obſcurity ſuppoſed in ſcripture. Therefore all who are and would be the diſciples indeed of the bleſſed Jeſus, would do well not to imagine there is infallibility in any private or public interpretation of holy writ explicable by mankind: "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of "man, but holy men of God ſpake as they were moved "by the Holy Ghoſt," 2 Peter i. 21. Pray, does darkneſs appear or diſappear at the riſing of the ſun? Is the ſun at laſt grown ſo beggarly, that he is fain to borrow light of the earth? Muſt the holy ſcriptures be beholden to the church for its clearneſs, and Chriſt himſelf not ſpeak intelligible, unleſs his holineſs the pope be his interpreter? Did Chriſt reveal to the world the way to ſalvation, and yet leave mankind to ſeek it in the mazes of darkneſs and obſcurity? Which was it? was it till a guide reſiding at Rome was commiſſioned to direct them in the way to it? This St. Peter (his pretended predeceſſor) never gave the leaſt hint of, or was it ever heatd of in ſcripture.

What ſtrange witneſſes were the apoſtles, if they did not ſpeak and write all the eſſential truths of the goſpel with plainneſs, who aſſures mankind they did? 2 Cor. iii. ver. 12. And for that very end purpoſely laid aſide

all the excellency of words of human wiſdom, 1 Cor. ii. ver. 1. that mankind might not be to ſeek for their meaning in a matter of ſo great moment. That the goſpel was hid to none but ſuch as are loſt, "whoſe "eyes are blinded by the God of this world," 2 Cor. iv. ver. 3, 4. How had mankind been to ſeek, as to the truth of chriſtianity, if the apoſtles had not declared the doctrine of the goſpel with all evidence and perſpicuity? Whom muſt unbelievers or chriſtians believe in, in this caſe, which is an affair of an infinite importance, the apoſtles of Chriſt, or the pope at Rome? The doctrines revealed by the goſpel are a light to mankind, directing them in their way to heaven, which is an infallible rule to walk by.

It is a ſtrange quality of light to be obſcure, and of a rule to be crooked.

It is not only evident, from the apoſtles own affirmations, that they laid aſide all affected obſcurity, and ambiguous expreſſions, and philoſophical terms, whereby the world might have been to ſeek for what they were to believe, but it is likewiſe very evident and clear, from the very nature of the doctrine they preached, and the deſign of their preaching of it, that they made uſe of no ſuch falſe arts.

Pray what occaſion is there for Rhetoric in plain truths, or affected phraſes in giving evidence? How incongruous would obſcure expreſſions have been to the deſign of ſaving of ſouls, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching? if they had artfully ſpoken in their preaching above the capacities of thoſe they ſpoke to, they certainly

tainly could never have converted a ſoul without a miracle.

For the common and ordinary way of converſion, is to convince the mind and judgment, and to illuminate the underſtanding: but what good effect can that preaching have, which is ſo much above either?

The polite modern preachers in our days, of all denominations, would do well to take this argument into their ſerious conſideration, that their orations might be of greater edification to their hearers, than as if a barbarian chattered to them, 1 Cor. xiv. 11.

St. Paul tells us, "He that propheſieth, ſpeaketh "unto men to edification, and exhortation and com-"fort, 1 Cor. xiv. ver. 3. We preach not ourſelves, "(ſaith the ſame apoſtle) but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, "and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake," 2 Cor. iv. 5. If they had ſought themſelves, or their own credit and reputation, there might have been ſome reaſon that they ſhould have uſed the like method of the ſophiſts, among the Greeks: but they diſowned and rejected all theſe poor artifices of mean low-ſpirited men, "Their ſpeech and preaching, was not with en-"ticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration "of the ſpirit, and of power, that their faith ſhould "not ſtand in the wiſdom of man, but in the power of "God," 1 Cor. ii. ver. 4, 5. They declared the teſtimony of God with ſpiritual evidence: they renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, "nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but "by manifeſtation of the truth, commending them-"ſelves to every man's conſcience, in the ſight of

" God," 2 Cor. iv. 10. What could be more ſuitable to ſuch a deſign, than that great plainneſs and faithfulneſs with which they ſpake? We find in the teſtimonies of the apoſtles, (as Origen juſtly obſerves) nothing that is ſpurious or counterfeit, nothing ſavouring of the cunning craftineſs of ſuch as lie in wait to deceive.

It is impoſſible (ſaith he) to think that men, never bred up in the ſophiſtry of the Greeks, nor experienced in the rhetorical inſinuations uſed among them, could ever be able ſo ſuddenly to perſuade the world to embrace that which had been a fiction of their own brains.

The truth is, the apoſtles ſpeak like men very confident of the truth of what they ſpeak, and not like ſuch, who were fain to fetch in the help of all their ſkill, to find out ſome probable arguments, to make mankind believe that, which, it is probable, they did not believe themſelves, which was frequently the caſe of the great orators among the heathens.

We find no pedantic flouriſhes, no flattering inſinuations, no affected cadencies, no ſuch great care of the riſing and falling of the words, in the ſeveral ſentences which make up ſo great part of that which was accounted eloquence in the apoſtles times: no, every thing they ſaid was grave and ſerious; every word had its due weight, every ſentence brim full of ſpiritual eloquence. Their whole diſcourſe was moſt becoming the majeſty and authority of the holy Spirit of God,

which

which they ſpake by. And herein was diſcovered a great part of the infinite wiſdom of God, in the choice he made of the perſons who were to propagate the doctrine of Chriſt in the world: that they were not ſuch, who, by their great repute and fame in the world, might eaſily draw whole multitudes to embrace their dictates; but (that there might not be the leaſt foundation for an implicit faith) they were of ſo mean a rank and condition in the world, that in all probability their names had never been heard of, had not their doctrine made them famous. To this purpoſe Origen excellently ſpeaks: I am of opinion, (ſays he) that Jeſus did purpoſely make uſe of ſuch preachers of his doctrine, that there might be no room for ſuſpicion, that they came inſtructed in the arts of ſophiſtry, but that it be clearly manifeſt to thoſe who might conſider of it, that there was no deſign in thoſe who diſcovered ſo much ſimplicity in their writings, and that they had a more divine power, which was more efficacious than the greateſt volubility of expreſſion, or ornaments of ſpeech, or the artifices which were uſed in the Grecian compoſitions. Vid. C. Celſum, l. 3. You may be ſure the apoſtles delivered their doctrines with the greateſt openneſs and freedom of ſpeech; they did not give out one thing to the world, and another to their private diſciples: but with great freedom and boldneſs declared their doctrine in the moſt public places, and before their greateſt enemies. They knew they were looked on as deceivers by the world, but yet they knew themſelves to be true, 2 Cor. vi. 8.

This is the uſual requital good men have from the world, that they are looked on as the greateſt deceivers of it. If it be ſo with others, we have much leſs cauſe to wonder at it, when he, who by the prophet is ſtiled "the deſire of all nations," Haggai ii. 7. and who is by another prophet foretold, "as deſpiſed and "rejected of men," Iſa. liii. ver. 3. was, when in this world, call'd "a deceiver," Matt. xxvii. 63. No wonder then if his diſciples were accounted ſuch, although they manifeſted their veracity by their open carriage and free ſpeaking to the faces of their greateſt adverſaries.

The apoſtles neither feared the Jews ſkill in their law, nor the wiſdom and ſubtilty of the Greeks. St. Paul preached Chriſt openly among the Jews, in their ſynagogues: and he encountered the epicureans and ſtoics among the Athenians, Acts xvii. 18. and preached to them Jeſus and the reſurrection. If the apoſtles had any thing of deceit in them, as to things they related concerning Chriſt, they would not certainly have ſpoken with ſo much confidence in him, in the preſence of thoſe who had been his murderers; but we find they appealed to themſelves; as alſo to the miracles which he wrought among them; and for the truth of his reſurrection, they were ready to lay down their lives.

That his body was gone, was evident: that his diſciples ſhould take it was impoſſible, as they had ſuch a ſtrong guard of ſoldiers watching it, who would have

have been glad to have discovered any attempt of it. But on the contrary, all his disciples were exceeding fearful and timorous, insomuch that they fled upon Christ's being apprehended. Now what could it be to make such fearful persons afterwards so courageous and resolute as they were, had there not been something more than ordinary to convince and encourage them? The apostles delivered their testimonies with the greatest particularity, as to all circumstances: they do not change or alter any of them upon different examinations before several persons; they all agree in the greatest constancy to themselves, and uniformity with each other.

As to matters of indifferency, we find the apostles very yielding and condescending, but as to any thing which concerned their testimony, they were most constant and stedfast.

Had the gospel been some cunningly contrived fancy, it had been impossible but so many different persons, in such different places, and under such different conditions, would have varied as to some very material circumstance of it; or else they would have been so wise as to have delivered it in general terms, without insisting much on such particular circumstances, which if they had been false, might have been very easily disproved: but with what particular enumeration of circumstances do the apostles preach Christ to the world? Peter tells the Jews, "it was Jesus of Nazareth whom he preached, "a man approved of God among you, by miracles, "and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in

" the midſt of you; as ye yourſelves alſo know him,
" being delivered by the determinate council and fore-
" knowledge of God: ye have taken, and by wicked
" hands have crucified and ſlain whom God hath raiſed
" up, having looſed the pains of death, becauſe it was
" not poſſible that he ſhould be holden of it," Acts ii. 22, 23, 24. And leſt they ſhould think it was not the ſame perſon who roſe again, with great boldneſs and freedom of ſpirit he ſaith to them, " Therefore let all
" the houſe of Iſrael know aſſuredly, that God had
" made that ſame Jeſus, whom ye have crucified, both
" Lord and Chriſt," ver. 36. Yea, that ſame individual perſon, " him hath God exalted with his right
" hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repen-
" tance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins," Acts v. 31.

Now if there had been any ground of ſuſpicion, as to the truth of theſe facts, who had been ſo able to diſprove them, or ſo willing and ready to do it, as thoſe perſons who had crucified him? For we cannot but conceive that thoſe who had a hand in his death, would have endeavoured by all poſſible means to diſprove his reſurrection from the dead. For what a caſe were they likely to be in, if theſe things which the apoſtles conſtantly preached were true?

If Chriſt had all the power in his hands, and there was no ſalvation in any other name but only in his, whom they crucified, they were like to be in a moſt deplorable condition. Therefore if any ſet of men can be ſuppoſed to be inquiſitive after the truth of theſe circumſtances, no doubt but they were; and if they

they could have found the leaſt flaw in their teſtimony, the world had ſoon been alarmed of it. The Jews, who were then ſo much diſperſed all over the nation, would have divulged it in all parts. The apoſtles would have been told of it, as they preached Chriſt in the public ſynagogues.

And can we in any reaſon think, but theſe Jews who perſecuted St. Paul, as he preached in the ſynagogues at Aſia, and afterwards impeached him ſo openly at Jeruſalem, would have enquired into all the circumſtances concerning Chriſt: and all the other Jews would have wrote to their friends at Jeruſalem to be fully informed of thoſe ſtrange things, which were told them openly in all places in their ſynagogues, by men of their own nation and language, concerning one Jeſus who was crucified, and roſe again from the dead, had there been ſo much as any the leaſt plauſible pretext, that any of theſe circumſtances were not true? Is it not moſt reaſonable to believe, that ſuch an obſtinate people, who were full of reſentment and malice, who were ſo vaſtly bigotted to their own ways and traditions, had propagated any thing that might have tended to the diſparagement of Chriſt and his diſciples? But we find malice itſelf could not find any flaw in the apoſtles teſtimony; for if they had, we ſhould have aſſuredly heard of it from the Jews, or ſome other great oppoſers of chriſtianity among the heathens, who pretended to be curious and inquiſitive perſons, ſuch as Celſus, Julian, Hierocles and Porphyry.

In the name of truth, what reaſon can any one have to ſuſpect ſuch a teſtimony, which paſſed uncontrouled at that

that time, when it was alone capable of being diſproved, and when men's intereſt and deſign would have put them ſo much upon it?

No teſtimony ought to be taken againſt a matter of fact thus atteſted, but from ſuch perſons who had equal or greater knowledge of the things atteſted, and manifeſt greater fidelity in reporting them. It is eaſy to make it appear that, ſuppoſing any perſons at that time had contradicted the teſtimony of the apoſtles concerning our Saviour, yet there had been no reaſon in the world to have hearkened to their teſtimony, in oppoſition to that of the apoſtles; and that on theſe accounts the apoſtles witneſſed the affirmative, which is more capable of being atteſted than any negative can be. The apoſtles were converſant with Chriſt much more than any other perſons were, by reaſon they were choſen for that very end by Chriſt, to be conſtantly with him.

Could any therefore be as capable of knowing the truth of all particulars concerning Chriſt then as they were? Had there been any ground of ſuſpicion concerning the deſign of Chriſt, in the name of truth, why could not the Jews have prevailed with Judas to diſcover it, as well as to betray his perſon? Judas had done but a good work, if Chriſt had been ſuch an impoſtor as the Jews maliciouſly and blaſphemouſly ſaid he was.

What made Judas ſo little ſatisfied with what he had done? he grew weary of his life upon it, ſhockingly deſtroying himſelf on the reflexion of his horrid crime.

crime. Certainly no perſon had been ſo fit to have been produced as a witneſs againſt the bleſſed Jeſus, as Judas, who had been ſo long attending him both in public and private, and had heard his ſayings, and ſaw his miracles, but had not patience enough to ſtay, after that abominable and moſt deteſtable crime, to be a witneſs againſt him. But Providence ordered it ſo that he was the greateſt witneſs at that time for him; for he confeſſed to the chief prieſts and elders that he had ſinned, by betraying innocent blood. They ſaid to him, "What is that to us? ſee thou to that," Matth. xxvii. 4. which anſwer of theirs amounts to an acknowledgment of the truth of his confeſſion. What poſſible evidence could have been given more in behalf of our Saviour than Judas, and the chief prieſts and elders themſelves?

When a perſon ſo covetous as to betray his maſter for thirty pieces of ſilver, was ſo ſick of his bargain, that he goes and returns the money to the chief prieſts and elders who had bribed him, declaring publicly, that the perſon was innocent whom he had betrayed; who alſo confirmed it by being immediately himſelf conſcious of his atrocious guilt; and inſtead of the chief prieſts and elders telling him that he had done a good deed in betraying his maſter, (when he confeſſed to them he was innocent, could not gainſay it, or diſprove it) otherwiſe would have readily done it for their own juſtification. Conſider that vile miſcreant Judas was one intimately acquainted with the bleſſed Jeſus, and much better than any of the witneſſes whom afterwards they ſuborned againſt him; who yet contradict-

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ed each other, and at laſt could produce nothing in the judgment of Pilate, the heathen governor, to believe Chriſt worthy of death; "Who took water, and waſhed "his hands before the multitude, ſaying, I am inno-"cent of the blood of this juſt perſon; ſee ye to it," Matth. xxvii. 24. The apoſtles were more free from deſign than any counter witneſs could be, becauſe they could not poſſibly have any other motive to affirm what they did, but full conviction of the truth of what they ſpoke. Therefore if any of the Jews at that time had aſſerted any thing contrary to the apoſtles, it would have been on account of preſerving their honour and reputation with the people, and for ſupporting their traditions; and on the account to defend themſelves in their enmity againſt the bleſſed Jeſus, though they had not the leaſt foundation or reaſon for it.

Who would believe the teſtimony of the ſcribes and phariſees, who had ſo great authority among the people, which they were like to loſe, if Chriſt's doctrine was true, before that of the apoſtles, who parted with their all for the ſake of him, and ventured themſelves wholly on the truth of his doctrine?

None ever did ſo much to atteſt the negative as the apoſtles did, to prove their fidelity to the affirmative. Had a ſufficient witneſs been timely produced, it cannot be reaſonably thought that the apoſtles would have run ſo many conſiderable hazards in preaching the things which related to the perſon and actions of Chriſt. Did ever any lay down their lives to undeceive the world? If the apoſtles were guilty of abuſing it, the number

number of ſuch perſons had been inconſiderable, in compariſon of thoſe who were ſo fully perſwaded of the truth of thoſe things which concern our Saviour: who were all of them ready (as moſt of them did) to atteſt the truth of it with their lives. Whence ſhould ſo many perſons ſuddenly grow ſo confident of the truth of ſuch things which were contrary to their former perſwaſions, education and intereſt, had they not been delivered in ſuch a way, that they were aſſured of the undoubted truth of them? matters of fact being firſt believed, on account of the eye and ear witneſſes, and received with an univerſal and uncontrouled aſſent by all ſuch perſons who have thought themſelves concerned in knowing the truth of them, is a ſufficient foundation for a firm aſſent to be built upon. Such perſons therefore who thus became believers, had both liberty and opportunity to be fully convinced of the truth of them before they believed them; conſequently no reaſon or motive can be aſſigned on which they ſhould be induced to believe theſe things, but the undoubted evidence of truth, which were along with them. It muſt be acknowledged that in Mahometiſm vaſt numbers of perſons have for ſeveral centuries continued in the belief of that vile impoſtor Mahomet; but there is a very ſufficient reaſon to be given for it; the arbitrary power of the ſword kept them in awe, and ſtrictly forbad all the followers of Mahomet to diſpute their religion at all, or compare it with any other; conſequently it is not to be wondered at to find ſo great part of the world is under the tyranny of the Turk. Neither is it at all to be wondered at that ſuch a number of thoſe profeſſing

feſſing chriſtians ſhould believe a great number of erroneous doctrines, and live in the practice of abſurd ſuperſtitions, becauſe it is to be conſidered that the prevalency of education has a mighty and powerful effect on mankind, eſpecially on weak heads and obſtinate hearts.

And when we conſider what an awe an inquiſition muſt have upon timorous and irreſolved perſons, yea upon ſtout hearts, (liberty being dear and precious to all mankind) it is not to be wondered at: but now when a great number of perſons who are ſober and inquiſitive, ſhall, contrary to the principles of their education, and without fear of any human power and force, (which they beforehand are ſenſible will perſecute and puniſh them) and after diligent enquiry made into the ground on which they believe, forſake all their former perſwaſions, and reſolvedly adhere to the truth of the doctrine propounded to them, though it coſt them their lives; if this is not a ſufficient reaſon to think their doctrine true, we muſt believe mankind to be the moſt ſilly, miſerable, unhappy creatures in the world, that will, with ſo much reſolution, part with all the advantage of this life, for the ſake of one to come, if that be not undoubtedly certain, and the doctrine propoſing it infallibly true.

It is an obſervable circumſtance in the propagation of the chriſtian religion, that though God made choice at firſt of perſons generally of mean rank and condition in the world, to be preachers of the goſpel, "Chooſing the weak things of the world, "as the apoſtle ſaid, to confound the things that

"are

" are mighty," 1 Cor. i. 27. God thereby making " it clearly appear that " our faith doth not ſtand " in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God," 1 Cor. ii. 5. yet ſoon after the goſpel was preached abroad in the world, we find perſons of great rank and reputation for great parts and abilities, engaged in the profeſſion of the chriſtian faith.

In the hiſtory of the acts of the apoſtles we read of Sergius, a proconſul of Dionyſius the Areopagite, converted to the faith of Chriſt. And in the ſucceeding ages of the church, many perſons of great eminency for their excellent learning and abilities, ſuch as Juſtin martyr; one, who before he became a chriſtian, was very converſant with all the ſects of the philoſophers, ſtoics, peripatetics, pythagoreans, and at laſt was a profeſſed platoniſt, till he was converted from Plato to Chriſt, and then found that true which he ſpeaks of, in his dialogue with Trypho: that after all his enquiries into philoſophy (ſpeaking of the doctrine of Chriſt) that he found chriſtianity to be the only ſure and profitable philoſophy. And when Trypho derides him as a man of very eaſy faith, for leaving the doctrine of Plato for that of Chriſt, (for we find by him, the Jews then had a more favourable opinion of the Platoniſts than of the chriſtians) Juſtin Martyr is ſo far from being moved with ſuch reproaches, that he tells him, he would undertake to demonſtrate to him, that the chriſtians did not give credit to empty fables, or any aſſertions that were not to be proved, but to ſuch a doctrine as was full of a divine ſpirit and power, and flouriſhed with grace.

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At Alexandria we meet with a ſucceſſion of excellent perſons, who not only embraced chriſtianity themſelves, but became defenders of the faith.

Euſebius informs us, that Pantœnus was an excellent ſtoick before he became a chriſtian, who afterwards was very zealous for the cauſe of Chriſt: that, in imitation of the apoſtles, he went into India, in order to convert the inhabitants to chriſtianity, and at his return was made rector of the ſchool at Alexandria, which (as the ſame author informs us) was much frequented by ſuch, who were well ſkilled in human, as well as divine learning.

The learning of Origen is ſufficiently known, which was in ſuch great reputation, in his own time, that not only chriſtians but philoſophers flocked to his lectures at Alexandria, as Euſebius informs us, where he read the mathematicks and other parts of philoſophy, as well as the ſacred ſcriptures. And the ſame author informs us, that the philoſophers dedicated their books to him, and frequently choſe him as arbitrator, relating to matters of diſpute. And Porphyry himſelf, in his book againſt the chriſtians, ſpeaks with great reſpect and veneration of Origen, and makes a high encomium on him for his excellent learning.

In Origen's time, Hercules, a preſbyter of Alexandria, for five years together, frequented the ſchools of the philoſophers, and put on the philoſophic pallium, and was very converſant in the books of the Grecian learning.

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At Cæſaræa among the chriſtians, there was an eminent ſchool of learning for all branches of literature: ſuch were the famous Pamphilus: and Euſebius was ſo great an admirer of him, that ever after he was called Euſebius Pamphili. At Antioch was Dorotheus, as Nicephorus informs us, a perſon verſed in all kinds of ingenious literature. Anetolius, biſhop of Laodicea, one verſed in geometry, aſtronomy, and all kinds of philoſophy, as well as in the doctrine of Chriſt. We find in thoſe early days of the Greek church, what excellent perſons many of thoſe were, who were zealous profeſſors of chriſtianity.

As to the Latin churh, St. Auſtin was a ſtar of the firſt magnitude among them. Tertullian, Arnobius, and ſeveral others, may be deſervedly added to them. St. Auſtin juſtly obſerves, that though the Iſraelites went rich out of Egypt, yet it was their eating the paſſover, which ſaved them from deſtruction. And though theſe men had the ornaments of human learning, yet it was their eating the true paſſover, (which was Chriſt, by their adhering to his doctrine) that was of more advantage to them, than all their other accompliſhments. Therefore as we find in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, not only innumerable multitudes of perſons of great integrity and ſobriety in their lives and converſations, who embraced the doctrine of Chriſt, but alſo many perſons that were very inquiſitive enquirers after truth, and the reaſon and nature of things; we can find no juſt cauſe to diſtruſt ſuch a teſtimony, which was received in ſo unanimous a manner, by perſons as well

qualified to judge of the truth and reality of it, and as fearful of being deceived with reference to them, as any one in that preſent age poſſibly can be, yea much better, by reaſon of their living almoſt ſixteen hundred centuries nearer the time of the bleſſed Jeſus's appearance in the world. Therefore as this teſtimony was received by perſons who were very curious ſearchers after the truth and nature of things, ſo the doctrine conveyed by it was a matter of the higheſt moment. Conſequently we cannot but conceive, that perſons originally inquiſitive about other things, would be more than ordinary ſo about this, becauſe their eternal welfare and happineſs did depend upon it. All perſons that are in reality truly religious, muſt at leaſt be ſuppoſed to be very inquiſitive after the ſtate and condition of their ſouls, eſpecially upon a teſtimony, if they had little or no aſſurance of the truth of it.

That none of all theſe perſons who were rational and judicious in all human knowledge, ſhould be able to diſcover the falſity, if any. It is not reconcilable with the general preſumption of mankind concerning Divine Providence, and the care God takes of them, to ſuppoſe ſo many perſons who ſincerely deſire to ſerve God in that way and manner which is moſt pleaſing to him, to go on in ſuch a continual deluſion, and never have it at all diſcovered to them. If all thoſe who have believed in the doctrine of Chriſt to be the only way to ſalvation have been deceived, we muſt either deny altogether a Divine Providence, or ſay, the devil hath more power to deceive mankind, than God to direct them, which is worſe than the former; or elſe aſſert,

that

that there are no ſuch beings as either God or Devil, but that all things came to paſs by blind chance and fortune. If ſo, it makes it ſtill more inexplicable why ſuch multitudes of rational creatures, the thoughful, ſerious, inquiſitive part of mankind, as to ſuch things, ſhould all be poſſeſſed with the truth and certainty of them; and the greater the reprobate, the more ignorant, wicked, and profane any perſons are, the more prone they are to mock and deride the religious and inquiſitive part of mankind, who believe them. If ſuch perſons ſee more into reaſon and truth than the ſober and judicious part of mankind, let us bid adieu to humanity, and adore the brutes, if we admire their judgments moſt, who come the neareſt to them.

The multitudes of the beforementioned perſons conſenting to the truths of the goſpel of Chriſt, could have no other engagements to this conſent, but only their firm perſwaſion of the truth of the doctrine conveyed by it, by reaſon they who unanimouſly agree in it, are ſuch perſons whoſe other deſign and intereſt in the world differ as much as men's do. If it had only been a conſent of Jews, there might have been ſome probable pretence to have ſuſpected a matter of intereſt in it. But as to this thing, we find the Jews divided amongſt themſelves concerning it, do yet inviolably preſerve thoſe ſacred records amongſt them, from which the truth of the doctrine of Chriſt may be undoubtedly proved.

Had the chriſtian religion been enforced upon the world by the Roman emperors at the time of its promulgation, there would have been ſome ſufficient ſuſ-

picion of a particular deſign in it; but on the contrary, though it came with no other authority or ſtrength but the evidence of its own truth, yet it made a ſtrange and ſudden alteration among perſons of all nations and degrees of men in a very ſhort time, making its way into the very heart of the Roman empire, ſpreading itſelf ſo much, as that all ſorts and conditions of men, in innumerable places, were ſuddenly become chriſtians. What common tye could there be to unite all theſe perſons, if the undoubted truth and certainty of the doctrine of Chriſt had not, which was firſt preached to them by thoſe perſons who were eye witneſſes of Chriſt's actions, and had left ſacred records concerning the very quinteſſence of the doctrines of Chriſt, thoſe admirable inſtructions, which were their only ſure and certain guide to heaven.

There are innumerable perſons who do acknowledge the truth of chriſtianity, and yet could heartily wiſh that the doctrines of it were not true: ſuch are all thoſe perſons who are ſenſual in their lives, and walk not agreeable to the rules of the goſpel, yet dare not queſtion or deny the truth of it. Such who could heartily wiſh there was no future ſtate, nor judgment to come, that they might indulge themſelves in this world without fear of another: and yet their conſciences are ſo far convinced of, and awed by the truth of it, that they raiſe many perplexities and anxieties in their minds, which they would be moſt willingly rid of, and which they never thoroughly can be, till inſtead of having the name of chriſtians, or being profeſſors only, they come to live the life of chriſtians, and are

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the diſciples indeed of the bleſſed Jeſus; and are become experimentally acquainted with the truth and power of the holy religion of Jeſus, which he has aſſured mankind ſhall be the happy caſe of all thoſe who "hath his commandments and keepeth them, by ma-"nifeſting himſelf to ſuch in a very peculiar way and "manner," as promiſed by him, recorded in John xiv. 21. "who ſhall know the truth ſo as to make "them free," John viii. 32. and be fully ſatisfied in themſelves, "the doctrine is from God," vii. 17.

Therefore we find the more mankind have been acquainted with the practice of chriſtianity, the greater evidence they have had of the truth of it, and conſequently have been more fully and rationally perſuaded of its veracity. There are ſuch powerful evidences of the truth of the doctrine of Chriſt, by the effectual workings of the ſpirit of God upon their ſouls, that all other arguments, as to their own ſatisfaction, may and do fall ſhort of theſe. The poet Dautes is very pertinent and ſignificant, when he had introduced St. Peter, aſking him what it was his faith was founded on, he anſwers, that the ſpirit of God doth ſo fully diſcover itſelf both in the Old and New Teſtament, that all other arguments are but dull and heavy, if compared with it.

A truly enlightened conſcience, a real vital chriſtian, diſcovers ſo much beauty, excellency, and dignity in the ſacred ſcriptures, that they charm and raviſh the ſoul, which is unable to give a juſt idea of it to others, who are not thus experienced, by reaſon the eyes of their underſtandings are not illuminated to

ſee its beauty and excellency, which a mind truly gracious is inveſted with. How common is it in the world to find the attraction of beauty to be an unaccountable thing? One perſon does diſcover beauty and charms in ſome things, which others look on as mean and ordinary, if not contemptible; and why may not it be much more ſo in ſpiritual and divine things, by thoſe who want ſpiritual eyes to diſcover them? Therefore it is, that good men enjoy that ſatisfaction in their own conſcience, relating to the truth of the goſpel, which others do not attain to, though they likewiſe ſee the moſt rational, ſtrong, and convincing evidences, which induces them to believe its divine authority; which evidence is then moſt convincing, when it is ſeconded by the peculiar energy of the ſpirit of God upon their ſouls: but yet we ſee the power and force of the truth of theſe things may be ſo great, even upon ſuch minds which are not yet moulded into the faſhion of true goodneſs, that it does awe with its light and clearneſs, where it does not ſoften and alter by its heat and influence. Therefore whence cometh to paſs that ſuch powerful convictions ſhould ſtick ſo cloſe to the conſciences of thoſe who would fain pull out thoſe piercing arrows, but that they find a greater power in them than they are maſters of? therefore they cannot ſtand againſt the force with which they come upon them, neither find any ſalve to cure the wounds which are made within them, but by thoſe very weapons which were the cauſes of them: and therefore when wicked perſons under conflicts of conſcience, cannot eaſe themſelves by direct atheiſm, or finding reaſons to caſt off ſuch convictions, by diſcovering any invalidity in

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the teſtimony whereon the truth of theſe things depend, it is a certain and ſure argument that there is abundance of truth in that teſtimony, when mankind would endeavour to perſuade themſelves to believe the contrary, and yet cannot. The truth of this conſent appears from the unanimity of it among thoſe perſons who have yet ſtrangely differed from each other in many controverſies in religion. We ſee hereby that this unanimity is no forced or deſigned thing, becauſe we ſee the perſons agreeing in this, do very much diſagree from each other in other things; and the ſame grounds and reaſons wherein they diſagree as to other things, would have held as theſe too, was there no greater evidence of the certainty of theſe things than of thoſe they diſagree in. It is not a queſtion among thoſe who differ ſo much about the ſenſe of ſcripture, whether the ſcripture itſelf be the word of God, although the very accounts on which mankind believe it to be ſo hath been the ſubject of no mean controverſy.

All the different denominations of chriſtians in the whole world do agree in the matters of fact relative to it.

That there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, and that he did many great and wonderful miracles; that he was crucified at Jeruſalem, and roſe again from the dead the third day; now theſe facts contain the great ſuperſtructure of the chriſtian faith: and therefore the multitude of other controverſies in the world ought to be ſo far from weakening our faith as to the truth of the doctrine of Chriſt (which men of weak judgments, and atheiſtical and deiſtical ſpirits pretend) that it ought to

be a ſtrong confirmation of it, when we ſee perſons who peeviſhly quarrel with each other about ſome inferior and leſs weighty parts of religion, do yet unanimouſly conſent in the principal foundation of chriſtian faith, and ſuch whereon the neceſſity of faith and obedience, as the way to ſalvation, does more immediately depend.

And this may be one great reaſon why the infinitely wiſe God may ſuffer ſuch lamentable contentions and diviſions to be in the chriſtian church, that thereby inquiſitive perſons may ſee if the chriſtian religion had been a mere deſign of ſome politic perſons, the quarrelſome world (where it is not held in by force) would never have conſented ſo long in the owning ſuch common principles which all their other controverſies are built upon; and although it be continually ſeen that in divided parties one man is apt to run from any thing which is received by the other, and men do generally think they can never run far enough from thoſe whoſe errors they have once diſcovered, yet this principle hath not carried any conſiderable party of the chriſtian world (out of their indignation againſt thoſe great corruptions which have crept into the world under a pretence of religion) to the diſowning of the foundation of the chriſtian faith, which muſt be partly imputed to the ſignal hand of Divine Providence, and partly to thoſe ſtrong evidences which there are of the truth of that teſtimony which conveys to us the foundation of the chriſtian faith.

Thus we ſee how great and uncontrouled this conſent is, as to the matters of fact delivered down from

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the eye-witneſſes of them concerning the actions and miracles of the bleſſed Jeſus (which are contained in the holy ſcriptures as authentic records of them) and what a ſure foundation there is for a firm aſſent to the truth of the thing it contains from ſo univerſal and uninterrupted a tradition.

No rational account can be given for the admirable ſucceſs which the goſpel met with in the world in its preaching, unleſs the doctrine and miracles of the bleſſed Jeſus were undoubtedly true.

That the goſpel of Chriſt has been propagated with very wonderful ſucceſs is extremely evident from the long continuance of it in the European part of the world.

That this wonderful ſucceſs ſhould be an evidence of the truth of it will appear, if we conſider how the doctrine itſelf was contrary to the general inclinations of the world, and how the propagation of it was ſo much oppoſed by all worldly power. The doctrine may be conſidered either as to its credenda, or matters of faith; or as to its agenda, or matters of life and practice: both theſe were contrary to the inclinations of the world; the former ſeemed hard and incredible, the latter harſh and impoſſible. The matters of faith which are to be believed by the world, were no ſuch things which we may imagine the vulgar part of mankind would be very forward to run after, or embrace, becauſe contrary to the principles of their education, and the religion they were brought up in. The generality of mankind are very tenacious of thoſe principles and prejudices which are ſucked in at the time of their childhood and youth.

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There are ſome religions, the articles whereof are ſo wild and monſtrous, one would think it were impoſſible that any rational creature ſhould believe them: but they believe them moſtly or only for this poor reaſon, becauſe they are bred up under them: for moſt certainly it is a very great advantage, that any religion has againſt another, that it comes to ſpeak firſt, and thereby inſinuates ſuch an apprehenſion of itſelf to the mind, that becomes very difficult ever after to remove its prejudices, and ſo can't be eaſily brought to alter their opinion and judgment, though it be propoſed in the moſt rational and convincing way and manner.

All thoſe who have been bred up under paganiſm and the moſt groſs idolatry, have therefore a very prevailing prejudice againſt ſuch a doctrine, which was intirely irreconcileable with that religion which they had been devoted to. The ſtronger any prejudices are fixed in the minds of mankind by education and cuſtom, the greater ſtrength and power muſt that neceſſarily be in the goſpel of Chriſt, which did ſo effectually demoliſh theſe ſtrong holds, and captivate the underſtandings of mankind to the obedience of Chriſt.

Therefore Arnobius (Arnob. c. gentes l. 1.) tells the heathens that it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe ſo many perſons of ſo many nations to be ſo far beſotted and infatuated, as not only to believe a religion to be true, which was contrary to that they were educated in, but to venture their lives as well as eſtates upon it, had it not been diſcovered to them in a moſt certain and infallible way, by ſuch who had been eye-witneſſes of the actions and miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles.

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This therefore is ſufficient to perſwade and convince men on what firm foundations the faith of chriſtians ſtands, when in ſo ſhort a time it was ſpread over all parts of the world; and by the goſpel the moſt barbarous, inhuman nations were ſoftened into more than mere civility.

That men of the greateſt wit and parts, Orators, Grammarians, Rhetoricians, Lawyers, Phyſicians, Philoſophers, have forſaken their former ſentiments, and have very cordially embraced the doctrine of the bleſſed Jeſus. Therefore if the power of education be ſo ſtrong upon the minds of mankind, to perſwade them of the truth of the religion they are bred up under, (which atheiſtical and you deiſtically diſpoſed perſons make advantage of) this is ſo far from weakening the truth of chriſtianity, that it proves a great confirmation of it: its having obtained ſuch great ſucceſs upon its firſt preaching in the world, and notwithſtanding the higheſt prejudices from education were againſt it. If then mankind be ſo prone to believe that to be moſt true which they have only been educated under, it muſt argue a more than ordinary evidence and power in Chriſt's religion, which unſettles, yea eradicates the very principles of their education; which not only cauſes them to queſtion the truth of them, but totally renounce them, and embrace a religion diametrically oppoſite to them. If we conſider the inveterate prejudices the principles of their education were backed with among the heathens; when the goſpel of the bleſſed Jeſus was firſt made known to them, and what plauſible pretences they had of continuing in this religion which they were brought up in,

in, ſuch as the pretended antiquity of it above the chriſtian, it is to be wondered that ſo many were ſo ſoon and eaſy prevailed with to overcome their prejudice. The grand thing pleaded againſt the chriſtians was, that they thought themſelves wiſer than their forefathers. Cotta in Tully, De Nat. Deorum, l. 3. laid this down, that the main principle of Pagan religion was, to believe the tradition of their forefathers, although there be no exiſtence in reaſon for it. And after he had diſcovered the vanity of the ſtoical arguments about religion, concludes with this, as the only thing that he reſolved his religion into, as follows :

" It is enough for us (ſay they) that it comes by " tradition from our forefathers."

Lactantius fully ſets forth the manner of pleading uſed by the heathens againſt the chriſtians in the point of antiquity, Lactant. de Orig. Error. l. 2. c. 6. That they counted tradition infallible, and knew no other way to find the truth of religion, but by its being conveyed down to them from their forefathers.

How ſimilar do ſuch perſons plead, who contend for the corruptions crept into the chriſtian church, who make uſe of the ſame weak pretences for them, viz. that they were delivered down from the Fathers? Who are you (ſay they) that will ſee farther than antiquity? Now the very ſame arguments by which the profeſſors of chriſtianity juſtified the truth of their religion, (notwithſtanding this pretended antiquity) will, with equal force, hold for a reformation of ſuch inveterate abuſes, which, under a pretence of antiquity, have crept into the chriſtian church.

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Where reaſon and mere authority ſtands in oppoſition, he muſt be of a very weak underſtanding that knows not on which ſide to determine, with the greateſt ſtrength of argument, the juſteſt way of reaſoning.

Arnobius ſpeaks thus, c. gent. l. 2. when mankind are charged with revolting from the religion of their forefathers, the fact is not preſently to be condemned, but men are to ſee to examine the reaſons of it. Neither ought they ſo much to look at what religion they have left, as what it is they have embraced. If mere departing from the religion of our anceſtors be the great fault, all thoſe who own themſelves to be chriſtians were themſelves guilty of it, when they revolted from heatheniſm. If it be here ſaid the caſe is different, becauſe there was ſufficient reaſon for it, which there is not, as to the corruptions crept into the chriſtian church: if ſo, then all the diſputes are taken off from matter of fact, or from the cauſes inducing to it.

Therefore if the proteſtants be not able (as to the reaſons and cauſes of their ſeparations from the Romiſh church) to manifeſt that they were ſufficient and rational to every unprejudiced reaſonable mind, let them then be blamed and charged with hereſy, but not before.

The rational and juſt definition of hereſy is, that it holds and ſupports opinions contrary to the fundamental points of religion, which is the caſe of the church of Rome, who pronounces herſelf infallible, and that no chriſtians of any other denomination are in a ſalvable condition.

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But as ignorance is an inſeparable companion of impudence, it is the only poſſible excuſe that can be made for them. As for thoſe who know better, intereſt ſways them, and they are more knaves than fools, for by their craft they get their wealth.

The principles of the Reformation are juſtifiable upon the ſame authority of reaſon which the embracing of chriſtianity was, when mankind from among the heathens became chriſtians, and that the arguments made uſe of by the Romiſh church againſt the Proteſtants ſeparating from them, are ſuch as would have juſtified a pagan philoſopher too, in not embracing chriſtianity: or if it be unlawful for any party of men to divide from others in matters of religion, which pretend antiquity and univerſality only, it had been unlawful for Philoſophers to have deſerted Paganiſm, as well as for Proteſtants to deſert Popery: for according to the principles of the Romaniſts, the judgment in the caſe of the ſeparation, and of the truth of religion, lies in the party from which they depart.

If we now do but apply this to the old Roman ſenate, or emperors, in the affair of the chriſtian religion, and the dividing from the heathen worſhip, we ſhall quickly find how eaſy a matter it will be to make chriſtianity itſelf a ſchiſm, and the doctrine of Chriſt the greateſt hereſy. But as ſtrong as theſe pretences were then, or ſince, the power of the doctrine of Chriſt hath been ſo great as to conquer them, and thereby to manifeſt it was of God, when ſuch potent prejudices were not able to withſtand it; of which antipathy their

firſt greateſt charge againſt chriſtians was that of novelliſm: that they introduced a ſtrange and unheard-of Religion.

The common queſtion then was, Where was your religion before Jeſus of Nazareth? And the ſame queſtion hath been ſince aſked the Proteſtants by the Papiſts, Where was your religion before Luther? And the ſame anſwer which ſerved them, will ſtand immoveable now, viz. there, where no other true religion is to be found, I mean in the written word of God, which is only contained in the ſacred Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament. For this was the grand weapon, whereby the primitive chriſtians defended themſelves againſt the aſſaults of paganiſm, notwithſtanding its pretended univerſality. Settlements by laws of heathen worſhip were ſo much pretended and pleaded for, that as far as we can find by the hiſtory of the primitive church, the pretence on which the chriſtian ſuffered was ſedition, and oppoſing the eſtabliſhed laws.

It appears by Tertullian, Apol. c. 38. that the chriſtians were reckoned among unlawful aſſemblies: the politicians and ſtateſmen were all for preſerving the civil laws; they troubled not themſelves much about any religion, but only that which was ſettled by their laws, which they ſought to maintain and uphold; for this reaſon, becauſe the acting contrary to it might cauſe ſome diſturbance to the civil ſtate.

There were ſeveral laws which the chriſtians were brought under and condemned for the breach of. The law againſt conventicles, (as they were frequently pleaſed to ſtile them) which were the meetings of chriſtians together; thence the places where the chriſtians aſſembled

bled for the worſhip of God, were commonly called conventicles, Obſervat. in Amor. l. 4. The reaſon of it was becauſe the heathens judged thoſe aſſemblies of chriſtians to be illegal ſocieties. When the chriſtians began to be ſomewhat numerous, and had, according to the principles of their religion, frequent aſſemblings for divine worſhip, and did confederate together (by ſuch ſymbols as that of being waſhed with water, and eating and drinking together, which was all the heathens apprehended by their uſe of Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper) the proconful and other magiſtrates in their ſeveral provinces brought the chriſtians under their edicts, and ſo puniſhed them for the breach of the laws.

It appears by Pliny, lib. x. cap. 97. in his epiſtle to Trajan, that this was the only or chief cauſe for which the wiſer heathens did proceed againſt the chriſtians: for we find the proconſul troubled not himſelf about the truth and evidence of the chriſtian religion.

And when any chriſtians were brought before him, he frequently interrogated them whether they were chriſtians or not; and if they perſiſted in it that they were, then he puniſhed them, not ſo much for their religion, and for their ſtedfaſtneſs to the doctrines of Chriſt, as for the contempt of civil authority.

That which the chriſtians now pleaded for themſelves why they ſhould not be reckoned among the factions of the people, was that which they gave in anſwer to Pliny, viz. that all that they were chargeable with was, that they on their ſolemn days met together for divine worſhip, and to covenant with each other only for the practice

tice of thoſe things, which were as much for the good of mankind in general, as it was for their own, viz. that they would not injure and defraud others as to their bodies or eſtates; but ſtill chriſtianity was looked on by them as a great innovation; inſomuch that the chriſtians were accuſed of being enemies to mankind, as well as to their laws, by reaſon they drew more off from their ſuperſtitious religion, than ever any ſet of men had done before.

When St. Paul preached at Athens, the firſt accuſation againſt him was, that he was a preacher of ſtrange deities, becauſe he preached to them "Jeſus and the reſur-"rection," Acts xvii. 18. And Demetrius at Epheſus knew no ſuch potent argument againſt St. Paul, as that his religion deſtroyed the worſhip of Diana, whom all Aſia and the world worſhipped, Acts xix. 17.

The primitive chriſtians were then accounted as it were antipodes to the whole world; on which account they were ſeverely dealt with. The reaſon or ground the heathens had for deteſting the chriſtians was, that the chriſtians declared enmity againſt the idolatrous temples and worſhip of the heathens.

Sometimes the heathens rage and malice was ſo great as to accuſe the chriſtians with treaſon, and to pronounce them enemies to all civil government, by reaſon they would not ſacrifice for the Emperor's ſafety. The accuſations againſt them for treaſon lay, in their refuſing to ſupplicate their idol gods for the Emperor's welfare. They would not ſwear by the Emperor's genius; nevertheleſs they did not refuſe to teſtify their allegiance, and

to ſwear by the Emperor's ſafety. However, they would not worſhip the Emperors as gods, which was then grown a common cuſtom. Nay, the primitive chriſtians were very ſcrupulous of calling the Emperor Dominus, or Lord, becauſe the venerable name Lord was an attribute of God's, applied as a name to him only in holy writ. The reaſon of their ſcrupuloſity was not from any queſtion they made of the ſovereignty of princes, or their obligation to their obedience to them, (which they were very free in the acknowledgment of) but from a jealouſy and juſt ſuſpicion that ſomething of divine honour might be implied in it; eſpecially as the adoration of princes was grown a cuſtom. Neither would the chriſtians obſerve their public feſtivals in the way and manner others did, which was attended with abundance of looſeneſs and debauchery, by all ſorts of perſons, and was deemed and accounted by them a piece of real loyalty; which made the chriſtians chooſe the hazard of loſing their reputation of loyalty, than bear a part in ſuch wickedneſſes then uſed.

They would have nothing to do either with the madneſs of the cirque, or the immodeſty of the theatre, or the cruelty of the ampitheatre, or the vanity of the public wreſtlings. Therefore we ſee what a hard taſk the primitive chriſtians had, when ſo many laws were laid, as birdlime or traps in their way, to catch them; ſo that it was impoſſible for them to profeſs themſelves chriſtians, and not run into a præmunire by their laws; and therefore it cannot be conceived that many, out of affectation of novelty, ſhould then declare themſelves chriſtians,

chriſtians, when ſo much hazard attended the profeſſing of chriſtianity.

Soft ſpirited men, and lovers of their own eaſe, would have found ſome fine diſtinctions and nice evaſions to have reconciled themſelves to the public laws, by ſuch things as the primitive chriſtians ſo unanimouſly refuſed, becauſe tending to profaneneſs or idolatry. Therefore the weapons whereby the apoſtles and primitive chriſtians encountered the heathen world, were not fleſhly or weak, but exceeding ſtrong and powerful, in that they obtained ſo great a conqueſt, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. over the imaginations and carnal reaſoning of men, (which were their ſtrong holds they ſecured themſelves in) as to make them readily forſake their heathen worſhip, and become chearful ſervants of Chriſt.

Thus we ſee the power of the doctrine of Chriſt, which prevailed over the principles of education, though backed with pretended antiquity, univerſality, and though eſtabliſhed by civil laws: which will appear if we conſider that not only the matters of faith were contrary to the principles of their education, but becauſe many of them ſeemed to be incredible to the natural reaſon of mankind, that we cannot think perſons would be ever forward to believe ſuch things.

Every one almoſt being ſo very ready to take any advantage againſt a religion which did ſo little flatter corrupt nature, either as to its power or capacity; inſomuch that thoſe who preached this doctrine, declared openly to the world that ſuch perſons who would judge of the chriſtian doctrine by ſuch principles which were

natural reaſon did proceed upon, (thoſe whom St. Paul declared acknowledged nothing ſuperior to natural reaſon, whereby to judge of divine truths) could not entertain matters of faith, or of divine revelation. But ſuch things would ſeem but folly to them that owned no higher principles than philoſophy, or that did not believe ſuch a divine revelation. Such perſons cannot know them by or from their philoſophy. See 1 Cor. ii. 14. becauſe a divine revelation is the only way to come to a thorough underſtanding of them.

And to ſuch perſons who do not believe ſuch a divine revelation, it is impoſſible they ſhould be competent judges of the doctrine of Chriſt; ſo that the only ground of receiving the doctrine of the goſpel is upon a divine revelation or declaration, that God himſelf, by his only begotten and well-beloved ſon, and his apoſtles, hath revealed or declared theſe grand and important myſteries to the world as truth. On which account it is, we are in duty and gratitude bound to receive them, although they are infinitely ſuperior to our poor, ſhort-ſighted, limited underſtandings and comprehenſions.

But we ſee generally in the world how few of thoſe did believe the doctrine of Chriſt, in compariſon to thoſe who were the great admirers of the philoſophy and way of learning which was then in vogue, and ſo much cried up. The reaſon was, becauſe chriſtianity not only contained far deeper truths and myſteries than any they were acquainted with, but were delivered too in a way of great authority, commanding them to believe the doctrine

doctrine they preached, on the account of the divine authority of the revealers of it. Such manner of propoſal of doctrines to the world the philoſophers of the Greeks were unacquainted with, which on that account they derided, not being ſuited to the exact method which their ſciences proceeded on.

No doubt, if the apoſtles had come among the Greeks with a great deal of pomp and oſtentation, and had fed men's curioſities with vain and unneceſſary ſpeculations, they might have had as many followers among the Greeks, for their ſakes, as Chriſt had among the Jews for the ſake of the loaves and fiſhes. But the affairs of the goſpel being of more inward worth and moment, than of outward pomp and ſhow, the vain and empty Greeks preſently had a quarrel with the manner of propoſing them, as that they came not in a way of clear demonſtration, but inſiſted ſo much upon faith as ſoon as they were delivered.

Thence Celſus and Galen thought they had reaſon enough to reject the laws of Moſes, and of Chriſt, becauſe Celſus found that they were ſuch doctrines which required faith and obedience, without giving the reaſon of mankind (as they thought) an account of the things commanded; as if the authority of the great legiſlator Chriſt, ſufficiently manifeſted, was not enough to enforce a law, unleſs a ſufficient account were given of the things required, to the purblind reaſon of every individual perſon's actuated paſſions and private intereſts, as to the juſtice and equity of it. And ſo the primary obligations to faith and obe-

dience, on the part of mankind, muſt ariſe not from the evidence of divine authority, but of the thing itſelf, which is revealed to the moſt impartial judgment of every one to whom it is propoſed: which thoſe who are ſenſible how ſhort and limited the ſtock of reaſon is, at the beſt, in mankind, and how eaſily that which they have, is moulded and faſhioned, according to prejudices and intereſt already entertained, will look upon only as a deſign to comply with the carnal deſires of mankind, in that thereby none ſhall be bound to go any further than their blind and corrupted mind ſhall lead them.

Now theſe being the terms on which the goſpel of Chriſt muſt have expected entertainment in the gentile world, how impoſſible had it been ever to have found any ſucceſs amongſt mankind, had there not been a ſufficient evidence given to it, by the power of miracles? That however ſtrange and incredible the doctrine might have ſeemed, yet it was to be believed, becauſe there was ſufficient means to convince mankind it was of divine revelation. Neither were thoſe matters of faith contrary only to the corrupt inclinations of the world, but likewiſe were the precepts of life; ſo alſo are thoſe things in chriſtianity which concerned practice.

There are two grand things which are the main ſcope and deſign of chriſtianity, neceſſary to take mankind off from their ſins and the world, and of all things theſe are they which the hearts of mankind are ſo incumbered with.

For

For the precepts of the goſpel are ſuch which require the greateſt purity of heart and life, Matth. v. 8. and which call upon mankind to deny themſelves, Matth. xvi. 24. " and all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to " live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly, in this pre- " ſent world, Titus ii. 12. " That they muſt be " cleanſed from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, " and muſt perfect holineſs in the fear of God, 2 Cor. " vii. 1. Having named the name of Chriſt, they " muſt depart from all iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19. That " they muſt ſet their affections on things above, not on " things on the earth," Coloſſ. iii. 2. and that the goſpel enforceth theſe precepts of holineſs with the moſt terrible denunciations of the wrath of God on thoſe who diſobey them. That " the Lord Jeſus Chriſt " ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty an- " gels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that " know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of Jeſus " Chriſt; who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting de- " ſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from " the glory of his power," 2 Theſſ. i. 7, 8, 9. That " the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all " ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold " the truth in unrighteouſneſs," Rom. i. 18. That no perſon who lives in the habitual practice of any known ſin, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. " That no man ſhould deceive them with " vain words: for becauſe of theſe things cometh the " wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience," Eph. v. 6. That mankind do but vainly flatter themſelves, when they ſeek to reconcile unholy lives with

the hopes of future happineſs: for the doctrine of the goſpel poſitively declares, " that without holineſs no " man ſhall ſee the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. And then in reference to things of this preſent life, which mankind buſy themſelves ſo much about, the goſpel poſitively declares, that " they who love this world, the love of " the Father is not in them, 1 John ii. 15. That the " friendſhip of this world is enmity with God. Who- " ſoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is " enmity with God, James iv. 4. That they muſt not " look at the things which are ſeen, but at the things " which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen " are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are " eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. For the converſation of real " chriſtians is in heaven," Philip. iii. 20. Therefore the bleſſed Jeſus hath commanded them to " lay up " for themſelves treaſures in heaven, where neither " moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves do not " break through and ſteal," Matt. vi. 20. Now the whole deſign of the doctrine of Chriſt being to perſuade mankind to lead a holy and heavenly life while they are in this world, " thereby to be made meet par- " takers of the inheritance with the ſaints in light," Coloſſ. i. 12.

Therefore can we think ſuch numbers of perſons whoſe hearts were wedded to ſin and the world, could ſo ſuddenly have been brought off from both theſe enchantments, without a divine power accompanying that doctrine which was preached to them? St. Paul declared, " He was not aſhamed of the goſpel " of Chriſt, it being the power of God unto ſalvation,"

" Rom.

Rom. i. 16. for indeed, no other power could be thus prevalent.

Though the goſpel of Chriſt be the only true myſtery, yet the propagators of it do not do by it as the heathens are wont to do with their famous Eleuſinian myſteries, which was kept ſo ſecret by all the myſtæ. St. Paul declares he knew no reaſon he had to be aſhamed of any thing in the eyes of the goſpel, that he ſhould labour its concealment, or ſhould not advance its veneration; for the more public the goſpel is, the more it manifeſts its power, for through it God is pleaſed mightily to work, in order to the ſalvation both of Jew and Gentile: and of all the ſucceſs of the goſpel, that upon the lives of mankind deſerves the greateſt conſideration. The great efficacy and power of the goſpel was abundantly ſeen in that great alteration which it wrought in all thoſe who were the hearty embracers of it.

The philoſophers did very frequently and deſervedly complain of the great inefficacy of all their moral precepts upon the minds of mankind, and that by all their inſtructions they improved more in knowledge than in real goodneſs. But now chriſtianity not only enforced greater duties on mankind with greater power and authority; for the ſcriptures does, as St. Auſtin ſpeaks, not make ſome obſtreperous, or clamorous, like thoſe tinkling cymbals the philoſophers, but it awes the ſouls of mankind with the majeſty of that God from whom they come. Neither was it a great and empty ſound, which was heard in the preaching of the goſpel; but when

when God thundered therein, he " broke down the " ſtately cedars, and ſhook the wilderneſs, and made " the hind to calve, and diſcovered the foreſts : and in " his temple doth every one ſpeak his glory," Pſ. xxix. 5. 8, 9. He humbled the pride of mankind, unſettled the gentile world from its former foundations, and wrought great alterations on all thoſe who attended it, ſo as to obey it.

The whole deſign of the goſpel is comprized in thoſe words which St. Paul aſſures us were ſpoken to him by the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf, when he ordained him to be his apoſtle, which was, " to open men's eyes, and to " turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the " power of Satan unto God ; that they might receive " forgiveneſs of ſins, and an inheritance among them " which are ſanctified by faith in Jeſus Chriſt," Acts xxvi. 18. And the efficacy of this doctrine, in order to theſe great ends, was abundantly ſeen in the preaching of that apoſtle, who was moſt inſtrumental in converting mankind to ſobriety and holineſs.

What ſtrange perſons were the Corinthians, before they were converted to chriſtianity ? for when St. Paul had enumerated many or moſt of the vileſt and moſt abominable practices of mankind, he immediately adds, " and ſuch were ſome of you ; but ye are waſhed, but " ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified in the name of " the Lord Jeſus, and by the ſpirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11.

The more dangerous any diſtemper is, the more malignant is its nature, the more inveterate its continuance,

ance, the greater muſt be the efficacy of the remedy, which works the cure of it, and the power of grace is therefore certainly the more ſeen in converſion, the greater the ſins have been before it.

It is an eaſier matter for to remove a diſeaſe on its firſt onſet, than it is to cure it, when it is of a very long continuance.

Now the grand power and efficacy of the goſpel wrought upon all ſorts and kinds of perſons, to manifeſt to the world there was no diſtemper of men's ſouls ſo great but there was a poſſibility of a remedy for it; and not only ſo, but pregnant and viſible inſtances were given of the power and efficacy of it; for they themſelves ſhew oft, ſaith St. Paul, "what manner of "entering in we had among you, and how ye turned "unto God from idols to ſerve the living and true "God, and to wait for his ſon from heaven, whom he "raiſed from the dead; even Jeſus, which delivered us "from the wrath to come," 1 Theſſ. i. 9, 10. Now that which manifeſted the exceeding great power and excellency of the goſpel was, that it not only turned men from one way of worſhip to another, which is an affair of ſome difficulty, but that it turned men alſo together with that, from their luſts and ſenſuality, to a holy and unblameable life: for ſinners being more in love with their ſins than opinions, it muſt neceſſarily be a greater power which draws mankind from the practice of habitual ſins, than that which makes them only change their opinions, or alter the way of worſhip they were brought up in.

This

This is that which Origen, throughout his works againſt Celſus, triumphs in, as the moſt ſignal evidence of a divine power in the doctrine of Chriſt, that it wrought ſo great an alteration in all thoſe that truly embraced it: thoſe who were vicious, debauched and diſſolute, it made them temperate, ſober and religious.

The doctrine of Chriſt converted the moſt wicked who villified it, (from all their debaucheries) to a life moſt ſuitable to nature and reaſon, and to the practice of all virtues; therefore certainly the goſpel could not want that commendation among all the ingenuous moraliſts, that it was the moſt excellent inſtrument in the world to reform the lives of mankind, and to promote real goodneſs in it, when they could not but take notice of ſo many perſons continually ſo brought off from their vain converſations and folly, to a life ſerious, ſober, and unblameable; nay, and ſome of the chriſtians were perſons of ſo much integrity and goodneſs, that their greateſt enemies were forced to ſay that their only fault was that they were real chriſtians. "Bonus "vir cujus tantum quod chriſtianus, (a very good man, "only a chriſtian):" but one would have thought this ſhould have made them have a higher opinion of chriſtianity, when it did ſo ſuddenly make ſo many good men in the world; eſpecially when this power was ſo manifeſted on perſons who were ſuppoſed incapable of being reformed by philoſophy; young, illiterate, mean-ſpirited perſons.

Therefore it may be juſtly ſuppoſed that it was not by the ſtrength of their own reaſon that this alteration

was

was wrought within them, but by that divine power which was able to tame the moſt unruly, to inſtruct the moſt ignorant, to raiſe up the moſt ſordid perſons to ſuch a generous temper, as to ſlight the good things of this life, in compariſon of thoſe which are to come. And ſo remarkable was the difference of life then between thoſe who were chriſtians, and thoſe who were not, (as there is now between a real vital chriſtian and a libertine, a free-thinker) that Origen therefore dares Celſus for to compare them, in point of morality, with any other ſocieties of mankind in the world; for the churches of God which are diſcipled to Chriſt, when compared with other ſocieties, ſhine among them like lights in the world; for who can but confeſs that even the very worſt part of the chriſtian churches exceeds the beſt of the popular aſſemblies? for he aſſures him that the church of God which was at Athens was very quiet and peaceable, becauſe it ſought to approve itſelf only to God; but the popular aſſemblies at Athens were ſeditious and quarrelſome, and in nothing comparable to the church of Chriſt there: ſo it is, if we compare the churches of Corinth and Alexandria with the aſſemblies of the people there. So that any candid enquirer after truth will exceedingly wonder, (how ſuch a fair iſland ſhould appear in the midſt of ſuch a ſea of wickedneſs as was in theſe cities; and how theſe churches of God ſhould be planted in ſuch rude and profane places: ſo the ſame author goes on to compare the church's ſenate with that of the city's. The church officers, with theirs of the aſſembly, appealed and declared that thoſe among them who were moſt lukewarm in their office, did yet far exceed

ceed all the city magiſtrates in all manner of virtues. Now if theſe things be ſo, how reaſonable and becoming is it that all vital chriſtians ſhould admire and adore the divine power and goodneſs of God, who brought about and accompliſhed ſuch glorious deſigns and ends by his only begotten Son, and that not only for the converſion and ſalvation of a few, but of great multitudes? The twelve apoſtles were the firſt fruits of this plentiful harveſt of converts which afterwards ſucceeded; and although Celſus (an Epicurean) ſeems to deny the poſſibility of any ſuch thing as converſion, by reaſon cuſtomary ſins become a ſecond nature, that no puniſhment can reform them, yet, ſaith Origen, he not only contradicted us chriſtians, but all ſuch who acknowledged any generous principles of philoſophy, and did not deſpair of recovering virtue, as a thing feaſible by human nature; and gives inſtances to prove the poſſibility of it from the antient heroes, Hercules and Ulyſſes, and from the two philoſophers Socrates and Muſonius, and the two famous converts to philoſophy, Phæden and Poleman: but yet, ſaith he, theſe are not ſo much to be wondered at, that the eloquence and reaſon of the philoſophers ſhould prevail on ſome very few perſons, but that the mean and contemptible language of the apoſtles ſhould convert ſuch multitudes from intemperance to ſobriety, from injuſtice to fair dealing, from cowardice to the higheſt conſtancy, yea, ſo great too as to lay down their very lives for the ſake of virtue.

How then can we but admire ſo divine a power as was ſeen in it! therefore it is ſo far from being impoſſible, that it is not at all difficult for corrupt nature to be altered

tered and changed by the rich grace of God, in preaching the glorious goſpel of Chriſt.

Lactantius excellently manifeſts, that philoſophy could never do ſo much good in the world as chriſtianity did, by reaſon that was not ſuited at all to common capacities, and did require ſo much ſtill in the acts to prepare men for it; therefore it was impoſſible all ſhould be well ſkilled in it, who yet are as capable of being happy as any others are; and how inefficacious the principles of philoſophy were to make them completely happy appeared by the philoſophers themſelves, who were very far from having conquered their maſterly paſſions, and were frequently obliged to acknowledge that nature was too headſtrong to be helped by ſuch weak reins as the precepts of philoſophy were.

The great influence that divine precepts have upon the ſouls of mankind daily experience convinces every rational mind of; for thoſe who before were paſſionate, covetous, fearful, luſtful, cruel, unjuſt, vicious, upon their being chriſtians became mild, liberal, courageous, temperate, merciful, juſt, unblameable, which never any were brought to by mere philoſophy, but rather taught the art of concealing vices, than of healing them.

But now when chriſtianity was ſo effectual in the cure of theſe diſtempers, which philoſophy gave over as incurable, and cured them with ſo great ſucceſs, and that not in a Paracelſian way, for them to relapſe afterwards with greater violence; but it did ſo thoroughly unſettle the fomes morbi, that it ſhould never get ſo great a

head

head again. Does not this argue a power more than philoſophical, which could be nothing leſs than divine power, that tended ſo much to reform all mankind, and promote real virtue and goodneſs throughout the world?

When we conſider what continual oppoſition chriſtianity met with from worldly power and policy, we ſhall find it impoſſible, that if it had been a cunningly diviſed fable, or any mere contrivance of impoſtors, but that it muſt have been diſcovered, when the moſt potent and ſubtile perſons bent their whole wits to diſcover it. It was the maſter deſign of the Roman emperors Julian and Diocleſian, to root out and aboliſh chriſtianity. And was it only the ſubtilty of the chriſtians which made theſe potentates give over their purſuit in deſpair of accompliſhing it? If the chriſtians were ſuch ſubtile people, whence came all their enemies to agree in one common calumny, that they were a company of poor, weak, ignorant, inconſiderate men; and if they were ſo, how came it to paſs that by all the power and wiſdom of magiſtracy and philoſophy they could never exterminate theſe poor ſilly chriſtians, but on the contrary, as they cut them down, they grew up the faſter, and ſo increaſed by perſecution, as was ſurpriſing truly?

Therefore it muſt neceſſarily follow, that there muſt be ſomething more than ordinary, and very peculiar, in chriſtianity, from all other religions, it not being advanced or promoted by any civil powers, but on the contrary oppoſed by them, and yet it gained ground by this tyranny.

Therefore it is an obſervable circumſtance, that the firſt chriſtian Emperor (who acted as Emperor in defence

fence of the chriſtian faith) viz. Conſtantine, who did not appear in the world till chriſtianity had ſpread itſelf over moſt parts of the habitable world: God thereby letting us ſee that though the civil power, when become chriſtian, might be very uſeful for the protecting of chriſtianity, yet that he ſtood in no need at all of it, in order to propagate it abroad in the world. But we find it was quite otherwiſe in that religion which had Mars its aſcendant, (Mahometiſm) for, like Paracelſus his dæmon, it always ſat upon the pummel of the ſword, and made its way in the world merely by force and violence; and as its firſt conſtitution had much of blood in it, ſo by the ſame way hath it been fed and nouriſhed ever ſince. But it was quite otherwiſe with the chriſtian religion: this never thrived better than in the moſt barren places, nor triumphed more than when it ſuffered moſt; nor ſpread itſelf farther than when it encountered the greateſt oppoſition. And herein was ſeen the great force and efficacy of the doctrine of Chriſt, that it bore up men's ſpirits under the greateſt miſeries of life, and made them with chearfulneſs to undergo the moſt exquiſite torments, which the cruelty of tyrants could invent or inflict.

The Stoics and Epicureans boaſt that their wiſe men wuuld be happy in the bull of Phalaris, were but empty and Thraſonical words; which none would venture the truth of by an experiment upon themſelves.

It was the Chriſtian alone, and not the Epicurean, that could truly ſay, in the midſt of torments, "Suave eſt & nihil curo:" and might juſtly alter a little of that common ſaying of the chriſtians, and ſay, "Non magna

" loquimur, ſed patimur," as well as vivimus, i. e. the chriſtians did not ſpeak great things, but do and ſuffer them; and this gained not only great reputation of integrity to themſelves, but advanced the honour of their religion in the world, when it was ſo apparently ſeen that no force or power was able to withſtand it. Will not this perſwade and convince you that the chriſtian religion comes from God, (is divine) conſequently infallibly true? You ſee that no fears, penalties or torments were able to make a chriſtian alter his profeſſion, who with chearfulneſs would rather bid adieu to life, than to his Saviour. This Origen likewiſe frequently takes notice of, when Celſus had objected againſt the novelty of chriſtianity, " the more wonderful it is, (ſaith Origen) that in ſo ſhort a time it ſhould ſo largely ſpread itſelf in the world; for if the cure of men's bodies is not wrought without a divine permiſſive providence, how much leſs the cure of ſo many thouſands of ſouls, which have been converted at once to humanity and chriſtianity; eſpecially when all the powers in the world were, from the firſt propagation of it, engaged to hinder the growth and progreſs of this glorious doctrine of the bleſſed Jeſus? And yet, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition of men and devils, the word of God grew and multiplied greatly, Acts vi. 7. and increaſed in number daily, Acts xvi. 5. and at length became maſters over all its enemies, and not only ſpread itſelf quite through Greece, but through a great part of the world beſides, and converted an innumerable company of ſouls to the true worſhip and ſervice of God.

Thus

Thus it is manifeſt to every reflecting, rational mind, from all the concomitant circumſtances of the propagation of the glorious goſpel of the bleſſed Jeſus, that nothing leſs then a divine power accompaning it was ſufficient to oppoſe and deſtroy the fury of worldly power and policy, and the prejudice, obſtinacy and malice of unbelievers, and to prevail on ſuch an innumerable number of perſons, contrary to the principles of their education, and to their indulged paſſions and vices, to their pride and coveteouſneſs, to ſhake off all theſe their golden chains and fetters, and put on the yoke of Chriſt, " and learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, Matt. " xi. 29. crucifying their fleſh, with the affections and " luſts, Gal. v. 24. " mortifying their members which " are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanneſs, inordi- " nate affection, evil concupiſcence and coveteouſneſs; " putting off anger, wrath, malice, blaſphemy, and fil- " thy communication, having put off the old man with " his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is re- " newed in knowledge, after the image of him that " created him, Coloſſ. iii. 5. 8, 9, 10. The eyes of their " underſtanding being opened, and turned from dark- " neſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, " that they may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheri- " tance among them which are ſanctified by faith that " is in the bleſſed Jeſus," Acts xxvi. 18. God grant this may be your happy condition, that you may in reality know ſo as to experience with great pleaſure and delight, in this your day, the things that belong to your peace and comfort in this world, and thoſe which will be for your unſpeakable joy and happineſs in the world to

come, before they are for ever hid from your eyes. Therefore let me earneſtly beſeech you ſo as to prevail with you not to wander any longer in the ſtupid, wild, ridiculous mazes of infidelity, " but ſeek the Lord " while he may be found; call upon him while he is " near," Iſa. lv. 6. Labour to procure the knowledge of God's will, and to obtain his grace and favour. Search after the light of life, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; hearken to his inſtructions, obey his precepts.

Do you not judge it fit and rational to follow after righteouſneſs, in order to obtain everlaſting happineſs? If ſo, " look unto the rock whence ye are " hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are dig- " ged, Iſa. li. 1. Have you not changed your glory for " that which doth not profit? Be aſtoniſhed, O ye hea- " vens! at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very de- " ſolate, ſaith the Lord, for my people hath commit- " ted two evils; they have forſaken me the fountain of " living waters, and hewed them out ciſterns, broken " ciſterns, that can hold no water, Jer. ii. 12, 13. There- " fore henceforth be no more children, toſſed to and " fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine " by the ſlight of men, and cunning craftineſs, where- " by they lie in wait to deceive," Eph. iv. 14. Beware of falſe teachers, whom St. Peter hath propheſied " ſhall privily bring in damnable hereſies, " even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring " upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction, 2 Peter ii. 1. who " were before of old ordained to this condemnation, " ungodly men turning the grace of our God into la- " ſciviouſneſs, and denying the only Lord God, and " our

" our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, Jude iv. Let no man deceive " you with vain words, for becauſe of theſe things " cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobe- " dience; be not ye therefore partakers with them," Eph. v. 6, 7. but open your minds and hearts to conviction; root out, extricate from thence all obſtinacy; ſhake off prejudices of every kind, in order that you may receive the truth in the love of it. You that have heard of the grand embaſſy of the only begotten Son of God: you that have given little or no attention to it; you that have read the glorious goſpel of Chriſt curſorily, with leſs credulity than you give to a common blundering, right or wrong news-paper, do not trifle away your precious time any longer. " Wherefore do you " ſpend your money for that which is not bread; and " your labour for that which ſatisfieth not? hearken " diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, " and let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline " your ear, and go unto Chriſt, and your ſoul ſhall " live," Iſa. lv. 2, 3. Receive the divine word of his grace with humility and reverence, attention and candour, with an honeſt upright heart, deſirous of believing and knowing the truth. Make it your principal ſtudy frequently and ſeriouſly to meditate on it. Impartially view and well weigh the whole deſign and tendency of chriſtianity, and you will find it entirely calculated to make mankind holy and good, like God himſelf, who ſent redemption to his people; " who ſo loved the " world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that who- " ſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have " everlaſting life, John iii. 16. Who gave himſelf for " our ſins, that he might deliver us from this preſent

" evil world, according to the will of God and our Fa-
" ther, Gal. i. 4. who was wounded for our tranſgreſ-
" ſions, and bruiſed for our iniquities, the chaſtiſement
" of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes are
" we healed," Iſa. liii. 5. diſpelling the ſting of death out of our corrupted polluted nature, who bore our ſins in his own body on the tree, and that for no other reaſon, conſideration, or motive whatever, " than that
" mankind might become dead to ſin, and might live
" unto righteouſneſs, 1 Peter ii. 24. in order to make
" us meet partakers of the ſaints in light, Coloſ. i. 12.
" and to receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,
" 1 Peter v. 4. a crown of righteouſneſs, which the
" Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give unto all them
" that love his appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 8. who will ren-
" der unto every man according to his deeds; to them
" who by patient continuance in well doing ſeek for
" glory, honour, and immortality; eternal life: but
" unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the
" the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and
" wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, unto every ſoul of
" man that doeth evil, of the Jew firſt and alſo of the
" Gentile; but glory honour and peace to every man
" that worketh good; to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the
" Gentile: for there is no reſpect of perſons with
" God, Rom. ii. 6. to 12. Be not deceived, God is not
" mocked, for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he
" alſo reap; for he that ſoweth to his fleſh ſhall of his
" fleſh reap corruption, but he that ſoweth to the ſpi-
" rit, ſhall of the ſpirit reap life everlaſting," Gal. vi. 7, 8. Therefore let me beſeech you to examine your own hearts,

hearts whether it is your inclination and desire to be such persons in all respects as the sublime religion of the blessed Jesus requires mankind to be, which your consciences must tell you is rational.

Would you be best pleased to find his religion true or false? are you willing to rest satisfied in your incredulity, and so think no more about it? Consider, if you have any beloved, accustomed, favourite passions which you like to indulge, and that are contrary to the purity and holiness of the doctrine of Christ, and which you vainly imagine the religion of nature does not forbid you, but may indulge without incurring the displeasure of almighty God.

If this is your real case, which is very much to be feared is the case of many, what will be the consequence of all such Deists or Freethinkers, who desire and endeavour not to believe in divine revelation. I answer, the consequence of all such will be, that they will not be at any pains in order to find it true: they will not so much as pray to almighty God to enlighten their understandings in order to receive the truth in the love of it, by reason they do not desire the christian religion to be true, the morals of it being too refined for them; they don't indulge brutish sensuality.

Christianity requires purity of heart and holiness of life. It commands men to set bounds to all their passions, to the lust of their flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and requires them to be humbled, mortified, and subdued in heart, which is not at all pleasing to carnal minds, "who love darkness rather that light, because "their deeds are evil, John iii. 19. for they hated the

" light, neither cometh to the light, leſt their deeds " ſhould be reproved," ver. 20. Therefore in order to ſtifle and ſilence their conſcience, they will and do furniſh their minds with every looſe unreſtrained principle, which has the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon to favour their darling ſins, their beloved vices. They will readily and chearfully embrace every audacious author that endeavours to undermine and invalidate the authenticity of the divine oracles, and love dearly the company of thoſe that burleſque them, that are ſatyrical, witty in their vain imaginations, are wiſe in their own conceits: their favourites ſhall be thoſe who can bring moſt arguments in order to ridicule chriſtianity. Tis to be feared this is the diſpoſition and practice of many of our modern faſhionable deiſtical freethinkers, or, to ſpeak more properly, inſlaved thinkers: becauſe they are tied and chained with their luſts and paſſions, and therefore can't think freely, no more than a ſlave can act freely.

To ſuch pitiful perſons, all the moſt cogent arguments chriſtians are capable to bring, though ſet off with the greateſt reaſon and eloquence, in order to recommend the refined, pure religion of the bleſſed Jeſus, are of no ſervice to thoſe who are thus wilfully enſlaved, blind and deaf.

You Deiſts would do well, exceeding well, and act rationally, thoroughly to conſider and well weigh the reaſons which the bleſſed Jeſus has given, why ſo many unbelievers continue in their blindneſs and wilful obſtinacy, which is as follows: " This is the con- " demnation, that light is come into the world, and " men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their " deeds are evil," John iii. 19. No wonder then that

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ſuch enſlaved thinkers and actors do not embrace the truth in the love of it, ſince their deeds or actions, and truth and goodneſs, is at ſuch variance and enmity one with another. Therefore now my hearty and ſincere prayer to almighty God is, that he would permit ſome ſore affliction to befall all ſuch enſlaved thinkers and actors, in order to alarm, rouſe and frighten them, ſo as that they might come to their right ſenſes, and ſhake off their chains and fetters, which is the principal cauſe of their incredulity, that they may be deſirous and willing to come to the knowledge of the truth, ſo as to be thoroughly convinced and converted, and become the diſciples indeed of the bleſſed Jeſus, vital chriſtians, real believers.

Almighty God has declared that " in the time of trou-
" ble mankind will ſay, ariſe and ſave us, Jer. ii. 27. in
" their affliction they will ſeek me early," Hoſea v. 15. The royal pſalmiſt moſt piouſly acknowledged that before
" he was afflicted he went aſtray, but afterwards he
" kept God's word; and again he abſolutely declares
" that it was good for him that he had been afflicted,
" that he might learn the ſtatutes of God. And that the
" law of his mouth was better unto him than thouſands
" of gold and ſilver," Pſalms cxix. 71, 72. God almighty grant afflictions and calamities may have this genuine and happy effect on you; then you will think yourſelves obliged to me for praying for afflictions for you, and be exceeding thankful to God for permitting them to befall you. O that you may ſee with your eyes and hear with your ears, and be converted and healed, which will be in reality your happy caſe, if with humility and ſincerity, and fervency of ſoul, you pray to God, and hearken

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to his word, and ſeek him, and ſearch for him with all your heart, then he will be found of you, Jer. xxix. 12, 13, 14. God grant that you may know in this your day the things which belong to your everlaſting peace, before the night of death comes, when they will be for ever hid from your eyes. "Behold, now is the accepted time; "behold, now is the day of ſalvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy "might, for there is no work, nor device, nor know-"ledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt," Eccl. ix. 10. Therefore delay not a moment to repent, and forſake your ſins.

Is not this the voice both of natural and revealed religion? Does not the voice of God and his providence ſay now, and command you above all things to take hold of the preſent time? "Acquaint now thyſelf "and be at peace; thereby good ſhall come unto "thee, Job xxii. 21. Young people, remember now "thy Creator in the days of thy youth, Eccl. xii. 1. "Turn ye all from your evil ways, and from your evil "doings," Zech. i. 4. Delay not a moment on your peril.

Let a heathen ſhame you into a greater ſpeed in this moſt abſolutely neceſſary work: "How long (ſaith "he) will you defer looking after the beſt things? "how long will you abuſe your reaſon?" Epict. En. "c. 75. Conſider that a very few hours, weeks, or months hence may be too late; thy day of grace over, death may have ſealed thy irrevocable character. God will not always ſtrive with the children of men; therefore how infinitely doth it concern you to improve the important Now; to accept of God's gracious offers and tender of mercy now. If you refuſe now,

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this may be the laſt offer. This may be the very momentous deciſive criſis. Conſider, your life ſtands on a very ſlippery foundation. A ſingle breath, and you are gone. As death leaves you, judgment will find you. Here reflect ſeriouſly. Pauſe a while. God grant it may anſwer the beſt of ends.

The bleſſed Jeſus hath declared to mankind, that "they ſhall die in their ſins, if they believe not in "him," John viii. 24. And St. Peter aſſures us, "there is no other name under heaven given among "men, whereby we muſt be ſaved," Acts iv. 12. And St. Paul tells us, thoſe who receive not the love of the truth, that they may be ſaved, God ſhall ſend ſtrong deluſion that they ſhould believe a lie: that "they all might be damned who believed not the truth, "but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs," 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12. and to thoſe who believed not, "God ſwore, "they ſhould not enter into his reſt," and Chriſt commiſſioned his diſciples "to go into all the world, and "preach the goſpel to every creature: he that believeth "and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth "not ſhall be damned," Mark xvi. 15, 16. O let theſe terrible denunciations to all unbelievers awaken and rouſe you out of your lethargic incredulity, your dreadful ſtupidity.

The poſſibility of being miſerable to all eternity, one would think, is a ſufficient argument for every rational mind, to make them in good earneſt in relation to their ſpiritual condition, ſo as to cauſe them not to be eaſy and reſt ſatisfied till they are thoroughly ſenſible and well aſſured that they are in the favour and friendſhip of almighty God, whoſe loving kindneſs is better than life, whoſe hatred is worſe than death; which is conſonant

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to the principles of natural religion, which you profeſs to believe in, as the exiſtence of a God, his providence, virtue and vice, the immortality of the ſoul, and rewards and puniſhments after death. That God made mankind rational and accountable creatures, capable of doing good or evil, and conſequently of pleaſing or diſpleaſing him, who will reward or puniſh them in a future ſtate of being, as their behaviour have been in this world virtuous or vicious, all rational creatures are very ſenſible of.

Natural and revealed religion both acquieſce in theſe truths. St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Romans, (which I look on as the key of the New Teſtament, if I may be allowed the expreſſion) aſſures us " that God will render to every " man according to his deeds: to them who by patient " continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, " and immortality; eternal life: but unto them that " are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey " righteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and " anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil, of " the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile. But glory, ho- " nour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to " the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile; for there is no " reſpect of perſons with God: for as many as have " ſinned without the law, ſhall periſh without law; and " as many as have ſinned in the law, ſhall be judged " by the law: for not the hearers of the law are juſt " before God, but the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified: " for when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by " nature the things contained in the law, thoſe having " not the law, are a law unto themſelves, which " ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts;

" their

" their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their " thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing " one another," Rom. ii. 6 to 16. and the bleſſed Jeſus has informed mankind, that " that ſervant which " knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, nei- " ther did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with " many ſtripes: but he that knew not and did com- " mit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with " few ſtripes, Luke xii. 47, 48. for the Lord will " judge the world with righteouſneſs, and the people " with is truth," Pſalms xcvi. 13. You that do not believe in divine revelation muſt acknowledge and confeſs, theſe are all equitable and juſt declarations, and the ſacred ſcriptures hath aſſured mankind that they will be put in execution at the grand and awful day of judgment: for they exactly agree with the voice of reaſon, and natural religion. If you are not tinctured with inſanity, you muſt believe it.

I importunately beſeech you (if you are in your right ſenſes) to recollect and ſcrutinize your paſt thoughts, words and actions, relating to your obedience or diſobedience of the laws, rules, and directions of natural religion; your behaviour towards God, your neighbour, and yourſelves. Then, and not till then, you will act rationally, becoming a reaſonable ſoul, as thoſe that know muſt be called to a ſtrict and ſolemn account before the awful and tremendous bar of God, the ſearcher of all hearts; who knows the moſt ſecret receſſes of the ſoul. " For there is not a crea- " ture that is not manifeſt in his ſight, but all things " are naked, and open unto the eyes of him with whom " we have to do, Heb. iv. 13. for in him we live and move,

" move, and have our being;" as certain alſo ſome of your own poets have declared, Acts xvii. 28. If your thoughts accuſe you, God is greater than your thoughts, and knoweth all things.

Reflect, conſider, the heart is deceitful above all things " deſperately wicked; who can know it? but the Lord " ſearcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, even to give " every man according to his ways and according to " the fruit of his doing," Jer. xvii, 9, 10. All theſe declarations you know are both juſt and reaſonable, agreeable to your natural ſentiments of God, and his future proceedings with mankind: therefore permit me as a ſincere, hearty friend, one that earneſtly deſires to be of real ſervice, to put the following queſtions with uprightneſs and impartiality to your own conſciences, with a ſincere deſign you ſhould know your ſpiritual ſtate and condition, in probing your ways to the bottom, in order that you may be enabled, by the grace of God, to rectify your paſt errors and miſcarriages; and for the future part of your life to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, which natural religion muſt tell you is acting rational.

Do you conſtantly reverence almighty God, the great preſerver, and munificent benefactor of all mankind, and bleſs him for every thing you enjoy? Have you an awful and amiable apprehenſion of him always on your mind, ſo as to beget in you a filial fear of offending him? are you ever grateful to him for the innumerable mercies you momentarily receive from him.

You know the crime of ingratitude of one mortal to another is looked on by mankind in a very deſpicable, heinous, aggravating light, how much more ſo then, muſt

muſt it be to our God, our conſtant unwearied friend, who is always doing of good, " ſending us rain from " heaven and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food " and gladneſs?" Acts xiv. 17. Do you each morning when awake from ſleep (the emblem of death) return your ſincere and hearty thanks that you have not ſlept the ſleep of death, but are comfortably refreſhed with health and ſtrength? do you humbly recommend yourſelves and all your concerns to his kind over-ruling providence the following day, begging of him to preſerve you from all evil, eſpecially the evil of ſin, and in particular from thoſe ſins which have the eaſieſt acceſs to you, and the greateſt predominance over you? do you humbly and ſincerely, and earneſtly requeſt of him wiſdom and underſtanding, that you may do all the good your natures are capable of, both to the bodies and ſouls of your fellow creatures, as your capacity, ſituation, and circumſtances in life will admit of? or do you not go forth and enter upon the affairs of life on your own ſtrength, vainly imagining ſo highly of your reaſon and underſtanding, that that is ſufficient to guide you in all things without the aſſiſtance of almighty God? are you always in a thankful frame of mind when you partake of any of the good creatures of God? are you humble contented and thankful in the ſituation and condition of life providence has permitted you to be in? do you do to all mankind, in every circumſtance and degree, what you are willing they in the like circumſtances ſhould do to you? do you do every thing for the honour and glory of God, and the good of your fellow-mortals? are you very circumſpect and watchful over your own heart, and do you harbour no hard or unbecoming

unbecoming thoughts of God, or ſecret reſentment, malice or revenge againſt your neighbour? do you abſtain from exceſs both in eating and drinking? do you keep your bodies pure and chaſte? is marriage honourable in your eſtimation, and whoredom deſpicable? at the cloſe of every day do your return almighty God unfeigned thanks for each mercy received the day paſt, humbly committing your whole ſelves, ſoul and body, to his moſt gracious care and protection the night following, that your ſleep may be ſweet, comfortable, and refreſhing; that if you awake at midnight, or at cock-crowing, your thoughts and deſires may be ever towards God? Or rather on the contrary, do you not boaſt of your hearts deſire, and make coveteouſneſs your gold, and through pride will not ſeek after God, not ſo much as having him in all your thoughts, much leſs in your deſires and your hearts? are not the thoughts of piety and gratitude to God, benevolence and charity to your neighbours grievous to your ſoul? are not God's judgments or mercies far out of your ſight? and have you not ſaid in your heart, you ſhall not be moved? are not your mouths full of blaſphemies to your Maker; or curſing, deceit, fraud, and miſchief to your neighbour? do you not take delight in vain, profane chattering, and hate and abhor every thing in converſation that is ſerious; that has a tendency to do good, to promote ſpiritual knowledge; that is really edifying, both for your own and others ſalvation? do you not ſleep and awake, eat and drink, go about your worldly employments, or trifle and idle away your precious hours, without having a grateful thought to almighty God, in whom the heathen

poets

poets have ſaid mankind live, move, and have their being.

If you will honeſtly and impartially examine your hearts, it is very poſſible, if not probable, you will have reaſon to humble yourſelves before the great Searcher of them, for ſome one or other of theſe aggravating ſins committed by you, either of omiſſion or commiſſion.

Let me adviſe you to follow the example of the poor publican in the goſpel, who cried out, "God be merciful to me a ſinner," Luke xviii. 13.

With the greateſt ſincerity and importunity I intreat you to examine the real ſtate of your ſouls, by probing your hearts to the bottom. I now recommend to you retirement from the world one hour or two every day, to humble yourſelves in the more immediate preſence of God, in order to be made thoroughly ſenſible of all your tranſgreſſions, which is a duty reſulting from natural religion. Therefore tremble before him at the ſenſe of the guilt which you have contracted by breaking the laws of natural religion, the obligations which you are under to God, and the duties neceſſarily flowing from thence, which are engraven on your heart. Expoſtulate with yourſelves in ſome ſuch language as this: O my ſoul, what ſhall I do to avert the puniſhment ſo juſtly due to me, for the manifold neglects of duty to God and my neighbour! O how innumerable are the inſtances wherein I have tranſgreſſed? How have I permitted my luſts and paſſions to obtain victory over my reaſon and conſcience! Humbly and earneſtly proſtrate yourſelves before God, ſeeking pardon and forgiveneſs, and for the grace of repentance and ſincere obe-

dience. If you are truly ſenſible of your ſins and follies, you will then be humble and ſelf-diffident of your reaſon and judgment, and concerning the maxims and tenets of religion you imbibed from education: or for the want of education, or from your own wild imaginations and indigeſted thoughts; or from the company and converſation of libertines, enſlaved thinkers; or from the poiſonous writings of infidels; deiſtical, enthuſiaſtical triflers.

You will alſo have great reaſon to believe, that by ſome one or other of theſe cauſes you have provoked almighty God, for not thoroughly examining his moſt gracious tenders of mercy and pardon in his holy word, with an upright and honeſt heart, deſirous of information and inſtruction, that you might believe and know the truth, however contrary and oppoſite to your vitiated inclinations and corrupted paſſions, and be prevailed with no longer to contemn the diſpenſations of his rich kindneſs and goodneſs manifeſted to all poor, frail, indigent, ſhort-ſighted mortals.

Pray, is it fitting and reaſonable that becauſe ſome of the hiſtorical parts of ſacred writ does ſeem to your fallible, ſhort-ſighted underſtandings, to claſh or diſagree with other parts of it, that you ſhould deſpiſe and diſregard the whole of it? or that becauſe there are ſome myſterious doctrines in it, far above your comprehenſion, or the comprehenſion of the moſt refined underſtanding, that yet you will not believe it? I deſire you would exerciſe your reaſon, and examine the religion of nature.

Is not all nature itſelf one grand myſtery ; the heavens above us, the earth beneath us, the waters under the earth ? Is not the production and ſuſtinence of an infinite variety of creatures, both animate and vegetative, by one only inviſible, omniſcient, omnipreſent Being, very myſterious, yea, incomprehenſible ? Is not your own exiſtence itſelf incomprehenſible to you ?

Can you comprehend how ſpirit and matter, your ſoul and body is united, and what your ſoul is, and in what way and manner it now exiſts, and how it poſſibly can exiſt when departed out of the body ? or how, and in what manner it will be reunited to the body at the reſurrection, when the body has been crumbled to duſt, and ſcattered about in the earth and air in millions and millions of atom-particles ? Can you comprehend immortality or eternity ?

Are not theſe myſterious unfathomable things to our finite, limited underſtandings ; which is comprehended by almighty God only, who is infinite in wiſdom, knowledge, and power ?

Are they leſs true, or leſs to be believed, for that they cannot be comprehended by us poor ſhort-ſighted mortals, who are but of yeſterday, and know nothing, " whoſe days upon earth are as a ſhadow ?" Job viii. 9. Is not God almighty all-powerful ? Is he not truth itſelf ? He certainly is ; and therefore it is moſt reaſonable for us to believe that thoſe things that are pronounced and declared true by him, merely on the veracity of his infallible word, though we cannot poſſibly conceive how or in what manner they are ſo.

He does not require us to believe any one thing which contradicts our ſenſes, but only to believe there are things true, which are ſuperior to our reaſon and underſtanding, above our comprehenſion; which all mankind will agree to, if they are not infatuated, and have not a tincture of inſanity in them.

In the name of the God of nature then, why do you act ſo vain and ſelf-conceited as not to ſubmit your proud reaſon to his infallible declarations? "Why doſt thou ſtrive againſt him who giveth not any account of his matters?" Job xxxiii. 13. Does not natural reaſon, or the religion of nature, teſtify the truth of divine revelation, "that as the heavens are higher than the earth, "ſo are God's ways higher than our ways, and his "thoughts higher than our thoughts,?" Iſa. lv. 9. "Do not all the works of God, and his diſpenſations "of Providence, proclaim this infallible truth? They actually do, and therefore it is rational and meet for you to argue thus with yourſelves, If the religion of Jeſus of Nazareth is true, and he was commiſſioned by God to come from heaven to earth to publiſh it, and I ſhould die in my preſent ſtate of unbelief, I muſt conſequently die in my ſins, John viii. 24. and therefore muſt neceſſarily be miſerable to all eternity? Chriſt commanded his eleven diſciples, and does now command all ſucceeding miniſters to publiſh, and teach his goſpel to every creature in the world; moſt poſitively declaring, "that he that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; "but he that believeth not ſhall be damned, Mark xvi. "16. Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever he

" he hath commanded them, aſſuring them he would " always be with them to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Now you Deiſts can make no ſort of excuſe or plea whatſoever, at the awful and tremendous day of judgment, nor can alledge that the goſpel of the bleſſed Jeſus did not reach you; for you were born and bred in a chriſtian country, and where the goſpel was preached on the firſt day of every week, in commemoration of the truth of it, and eſtabliſhed by civil authority, by King, Lords, and Commons, who has commanded it to be printed in your mother tongue, and have given all men free liberty to peruſe it, as oft as they pleaſe, none making them afraid: and all may worſhip God in that way and manner as their conſciences dictates to them is moſt agreeable to his holy word, without being ſo much as interrupted or moleſted, much leſs perſecuted for it.

All of you Deiſts, as well as us Chriſtians, live under the beſt and mildeſt of laws and governments, having the royal proclamation for your and our ſecurity, corroborated by the lords ſpiritual and temporal in parliament: which is not like living under an arbitrary, tyrannical, popiſh government, who perſecutes, impriſons and gibbets, racks and burns thoſe proteſtant chriſtians who will not deny the uſe of their ſenſes, by not believing bread to be the identical body of the bleſſed Jeſus, and wine to be his blood. But bleſſed be God proteſtant chriſtians have not ſo learned Chriſt; they do obey his commands by commemorating his dying love, ſacramentally partaking of bread and wine, in order to " ſhew forth the Lord's death till he come, 1 Cor. xi.

" 26. Take heed, brethren, says the apostle, lest there be " in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the " living God, but exhort one another daily, while it is " called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through " the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. iii. 12, 13. Therefore " fear lest a promise being left you of entering his rest, " any of you should seem to come short of it, for unto " you is the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but " the word preached did not profit, not being mixed " with faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 1, 2. This is your unhappy lamentable case; but see to get out of it, I beseech you, and take St. Paul's council, " follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them " that call on the Lord out of a pure heart," 2 Tim. ii. 22. which is love unfeigned.

The blessed Jesus hath assured us, his doctrine was not his own but God's that sent him, and that if any man will do God's will, " he shall know of the doctrine " whether it be of God, or whether he spake of him- " self," John vii. 17.

Natural religion tells you, that there is no surer or safer way to discover or find out truth, than doing the will of God. If you will be honest, sincere and upright in the examination of yourselves, in your humiliations to God, with a full purpose of heart and determination of will, (by the assistance of his grace) to forsake every thing that has the least tendency to displease him; and on the contrary, to be very assiduous to do all things that are acceptable and well pleasing in his sight; to search after spiritual understanding, as you would for hid treasures, mines

mines of ſilver and gold, " then you would underſtand " the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of " God," Prov. ii. 4, 5. Therefore let me prevail with you, " to truſt in the Lord with all your heart, and " lean not unto your own underſtanding. In all your " ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your " paths. Be not wiſe in your own eyes; fear the Lord, " and depart from evil, Pro. iii. 5, 6, 7. For in every " nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteouſ- " neſs, is accepted with him," Acts x. 35. Thus practiſing is doing the will of God. Then you will know the bleſſed Jeſus's doctrine is from God: and when you know it, do it; for he has declared thoſe are his friends only, that do whatſoever he commands them, John xv. 14. Be not eaſy and contented with a ſpeculative knowledge of the will of God, nor reſt ſatisfied till you know it vitally, that is, experimentally, and you find the yoke of Chriſt to be eaſy, and his burthen light, as he has aſſured you, Matt. xi. 30. and that his commandments are not grievous, 1 John v. 3. then he will fulfil his moſt gracious beneficial promiſe to you recorded, John xiv. 21. by manifeſting himſelf to your ſouls; that is, all ſuch obedient chriſtians ſhall not only enjoy the fruit and benefit of Chriſt's love, but they ſhall enjoy the ſenſe of his love, and experience the ſenſible manifeſtations, and inward diffuſions, of his love in their own ſouls. Therefore the only method to procure the favour of God and Chriſt, and to be in reality ſenſible of it, is to be very careful and diligent in obediential walking with him, and before him. Mankind may as well, and with as much reaſon, think

to nouriſh their bodies with poiſon, as to enjoy the favour and friendſhip of God and Chriſt in a ſinful courſe of life: " for he that ſinneth is of the devil, for " the devil ſinneth from the beginning. For this pur- " poſe the Son of God was manifeſt, that he might de- " ſtroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. Whoſo- " ever is born of God, doth not commit ſin; for his " ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe " he is born of God," ver. 9. That is, he is no evil doer, no worker of iniquity, no habitual cuſtomary ſinner: he goes not on in any way or courſe of ſin, as the reſolutely wicked do, who make a trade of it. He doth not tolerate or allow himſelf in any one ſingle act of ſin: he has not his will bent for it, neither his heart or mind ſet upon ſin, as the reſolved ſinner has; but he has a heart and will oppoſite to, and ſet againſt, all manner of ſin, by reaſon he has an inward principle inclining and diſpoſing him to hate and oppoſe ſin, (which is the ſanctifying grace of God, that cauſes him daily more and more to die unto ſin, and live unto righteouſneſs.) Therefore in this " the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the devil. Whoſoever doth " not righteouſneſs is not of God; neither he that " loveth not his brother, 1 John iii. 10. Let no man " deceive you; he that doeth righteouſneſs is righteous, " even as he is righteous, ver. 7. For whoſoever abideth " in Chriſt, ſinneth not: whoſoever ſinneth, hath not " ſeen him or known him," ver. 6. that is, whoſoever lives in ſin, and goes on in a courſe of ſinning, is the ſervant and ſlave of ſin; and although his reaſon condemns him, and his conſcience boggles at ſin, and his will

will is ſomewhat averſe to it, and not by any means thoroughly reconciled to it, yet if he yeilds his members inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin, he is a young ſlave and ſervant of ſin, and whatſoever his pretences may be he has no right knowledge of the bleſſed Jeſus, no vital faith in him: but thoſe that abideth in Chriſt are by faith united to him: thoſe have a living faith who are taught and governed by him, who make it their conſtant care and continual endeavour to ſhun and avoid all ſin: for bleſſed are they "that "do his commandments, that they may have a right "to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates "into the city, Rev. xxii. 14. of the living God, the "heavenly Jeruſalem, wherein dwelleth an innume-"rable company of angels, the general aſſembly, and "church of the firſt-born, which are written in heaven; "and to God the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of "juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the mediator of "the New Covenant, and to the blood of ſprinkling, "that ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel: there-"fore ſee that you refuſe not him that ſpeaketh; for "if they eſcaped not, who refuſed him that ſpake on "earth, much more ſhall we not eſcape, if we turn "away from him that ſpeaketh from heaven," Heb. "xii. 22 to 26.

Now I would challenge the whole world to produce ſuch a book as the Holy Bible; the book of books; the moſt antient of all books; teſtifying of Chriſt; foretelling the time and all the minute circumſtances of his coming; with his ſufferings and death; and all thoſe prophecies exactly fulfilled and accompliſhed in him.

But

But it is very much to be lamented, that many perſons, who profeſs to believe in natural religion, and who call themſelves rational creatures, will not be at the trouble and pains to enquire into the grounds and authority of the chriſtian religion; therefore it will be a juſt judgment upon ſuch, as ſhut their eyes againſt all the clear evidence of the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus, if they ſhould be given up to believe a lie; that "they "all might be damned who believe not the truth, but "had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs," 2 Theſſ. ii. 12. For the bleſſed Jeſus aſſured mankind, that, "This "is the condemnation, that light is come into the "world; and men loved darkneſs rather than light, "becauſe their deeds were evil," John iii. 19. The doctrine of the goſpel of Chriſt is too pure and holy for a carnal mind; therefore no evidence of the truth of it, how clear ſoever, will be received by ſuch. God cannot enter into their hearts, till Mammon is rooted out of them. "We cannot ſerve two maſters." Thoſe who have a clear ſight of heaven will put but very little value on the unſatisfactory, ſhort-liv'd pleaſures of this life; and, on the contrary, it is impoſſible, that thoſe whoſe whole concern is about them, who are drowned in carnal, ſenſual enjoyments, can have any true taſte and reliſh for ſpiritual, intellectual pleaſures.

For the love of this world, and "the friendſhip of it, "is enmity to God, James iv. 4. The carnal mind is "enmity againſt God," Rom. viii. 7.

It was a temptation of ſenſe which cauſed the firſt ſin to be committed by our firſt parents; and the way of reparation is, to open the eyes of their corrupted, polluted poſterity, and to give them a thorough ſenſe of their ſin, and terrible loſs of the enjoyment of God. Vice and wickedneſs clouds and darkens the eyes of our underſtandings, and makes them blind to the only true and real good pleaſure. The goſpel is fooliſhneſs to ſuch perſons. But it is not for want of evidence that cauſes mankind not to embrace the religion of Jeſus; but it is for want of conſideration, for want of humility, for want of a ſpiritual taſte, for want of real goodneſs, ſuch perſons have rendered themſelves unqualified; therefore not proper objects to receive the truth in the love of it.

The Holy Spirit by the royal pſalmiſt declares, that to "him that ordereth his converſation aright will be ſhewn the ſalvation of God," Pſalm l. 23. And the bleſſed Jeſus hath aſſured mankind, that "No man "can come unto him, except the father that ſent him, "draw him," John vi. 44. This was the reaſon why John the Baptiſt was ſent as a forerunner, to prepare the way for the bleſſed Jeſus, by preaching the duty of repentance, to qualify mankind for their receiving and believing in his holy doctrine: therefore ſuch perſons, who repented of their ſins, upon his preaching, did with joy embrace this glorious doctrine; and, on the contrary, thoſe who would not part with their beloved ſins, remained obdurate, though in other points and things were men of ſenſe and learning. As Chriſt told

told the prieſts and elders, as recorded in Matt. xxi. 32. " John came unto you in the way of righteouſ- " neſs, and ye believed him not, but the publicans " and the harlots believed him; and ye when ye had " ſeen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might be- " lieve him." And when the bleſſed Jeſus ſought to prepare them for his doctrine, by forewarning them that they could not ſerve God and Mammon, it is recorded by St. Luke that the Phariſees alſo, " who were co- " vetous, heard theſe things, derided him," Luke xvi. 14. But he immediately inſtructed them (if their proud hearts had permitted them to regard it) that what is highly " eſteemed amongſt men, is abomination in the ſight of God," ver. 15. And he ſet forth the truth of his doctrine, by the example of rich, hard-hearted Dives, and poor, humble Lazarus; and declared, it was " eaſier for a camel to go through the " eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the " kingdom of God," Luke xviii. 25. And that whoſoever he be that " forſaketh not all that he hath, he " cannot be his diſciple," Luke xiv. 33.

Now, if all mankind would explain this ſeeming harſh doctrine in its juſt ſenſe; which is, that thoſe who are not ready and willing to forſake all the pleaſures and enjoyments of ſenſe, worldly profits and advantages, as if they actually hated them (as Chriſt declared in a very particular and poſitive manner, as recorded in the 26th verſe of this chapter) when they come in competition with any one of his commands, and do not take up the croſs and follow him, they cannot poſſibly be his diſciples; it would not appear the leaſt abſurd, but very rational.

If Jeſus of Nazareth was now on earth, propoſing theſe conditions of faith and obedience, what a ſmall number of diſciples, among the generality of profeſſors, would he have? Many, many, it is much to be feared, would think heaven too hard to be obtained on thoſe terms, thoſe carnal reſtrictions.

Now the root and cauſe of all infidelity is the love of the world, the luſt of the fleſh, and the pride of life; theſe gratifications of ſenſe blind the underſtanding, darken the heart, and ſo obſtinately prevent ſpiritual and divine light to ſhine upon it: therefore, till theſe obſtacles are removed, the truth of the goſpel cannot be received, the commands of the bleſſed Jeſus cannot be obeyed: for the ſpirit of God, which is a ſpirit of purity and holineſs, will not enter and dwell in a heart intoxicated with ſenſuality and covetouſneſs; theſe embarraſſments muſt be firſt extricated, before the holy ſpirit will accept of any invitation from them; but the extricating of evil thoughts, evil deſires, evil habits, out of our hearts, muſt be from God: for who can ſay, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure "from my ſin," Prov. xx. 9. The royal pſalmiſt was very ſenſible of it, when he ſo earneſtly prayed to God to create "in him a clean heart, and to renew a "right ſpirit within him," Pſ. li. 10. And to "open his "eyes that he might behold the wondrous things out "of his law," Pſ. cxix. 18. And to "give him under-"ſtanding that he might live," ver. 144. And St. Paul aſſures us, that it is by "grace we are ſaved, "through faith, and that not of ourſelves: it is the gift

" gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. And that no man can ſay that " Jeſus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghoſt," 1 Cor. xii. 3. But though to obtain theſe things ourſelves is out of our power, yet the means in order thereto the bleſſed Jeſus hath aſſured us is not out of our power, which is to aſk, to ſeek, and knock for it. Therefore, " aſk and you ſhall receive, ſeek and you " ſhall find, knock and it ſhall be opened unto you," Matt. vii. 7. For if mankind, " being evil, know " how to give good gifts unto their children, how " much more ſhall their heavenly father give the Holy " Spirit to them that aſk him?" Luke xi. 13. But mankind muſt not aſk, petition, or ſeek with lukewarmneſs and indifference, but they muſt do it with all the powers and faculties of their ſouls; exerting themſelves with all poſſible vigour, both ardently and inceſſantly, as the importance of the caſe demands; their great all being at ſtake, which is nothing leſs than their precious and immortal ſouls; ſalvation or damnation, everlaſting, unſpeakable happineſs, or everlaſting, unſpeakable miſery: but God is gracious and merciful, long-ſuffering, and of great goodneſs, and thoſe who come to him in ſincerity, he will " in no wiſe caſt out," John vi. 37. For thoſe that " ſeek him ſhall find him, when " they ſhall ſearch for him with all their heart," Jer. xxix. 13. " For there is no difference between the Jew " and the Greek; for the ſame Lord over all is rich " unto all that call upon him," Rom. x. 12.

Therefore I conclude; earneſtly beſeeching you to be frequently addreſſing yourſelves to almighty God, with the profoundeſt reverence and humility, with the utmoſt

utmoſt ſincerity of ſoul, in ſome ſuch like expreſſions as in the following prayer, which I have compoſed, in order to beget in you a true ſpirit of ſupplication, a hearty, honeſt deſire to know the truth, that you may be converted to the faith of Chriſt, which was once delivered to the ſaints. And now, dear fellow creatures, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are ſanctified:" at the ſame time forewarning you, with the utmoſt ſincerity, in the ſpirit of meekneſs, with an unfeigned, diſintereſted love and affection, that if you ſlight, neglect, deſpiſe theſe offers of rich grace, made to you in the glorious goſpel of Chriſt; will not accept of him, his mercy, his eaſy yoke, and light burthen, his paths and ways, which are all pleaſant and agreeable, peaceable and joyous; but will follow the dictates of your corrupted nature; ſinful, ſhort-lived, imaginary pleaſures, unſatisfactory enjoyments, that God's ſpirit will not always ſtrive with you; that he will not oblige, or force you to be qualified to be meet partakers of his heavenly kingdom; the moſt exquiſite, refined, unſpeakable, eternal joys of heaven, whether you will or not.

Therefore I conclude my hearty, ſincere, affectionate, diſintereſted, pleaſant, pains-taking, long epiſtle to you, earneſtly praying and beſeeching you in this your day of grace, to conſider ſo as to believe and obey in the things which belong unto your everlaſting peace and happineſs, before death ſeals your

character,

character, and ſo are irrevocably hid from your eyes; which I pray God may not be the unſpeakable miſerable condition of any of you. But if ſo, you will, at the grand and awful day of judgment, charge the fault to no one but yourſelves; becauſe you wilfully diſregarded and diſobeyed the means of God's rich tenders of grace and mercy, ſo freely, invitingly, and alluringly offered you in the glorious goſpel of his Son: which goſpel (if you are in your right underſtandings) you muſt acknowledge is exceeding kind and beneficent, juſt and equitable, calculated for the good order of all rational ſocial creatures, for their mutual advantage, comfort and happineſs in this world, and their exquiſite eternal happineſs in the world to come. Therefore, "if you ſin "wilfully, after that you have received the knowledge "of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifices for "ſins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and "fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſa-"ries. He that deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without "mercy, under two or three witneſſes: of how much "ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought "worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of "God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant "wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy thing, and "hath done deſpight unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 26 to 30.

VALE & CAVE.

Edward Goldney, ſenr.

EASTER MONDAY,
LONDON, APRIL 16, 1759.

A

POETICAL ESSAY

ON

The Awful and Tremendous Day of Judgment, in order to Awaken and Rouſe the Deiſts out of their Stupid, Dreadful Incredulity.

OH! think you Deiſts, how you'll avoid Hell's foam,
How ſee the SAVIOUR ſeated on his Throne!
A Cloud his Chariot, and fill'd with burning Beams
Full Blaze of Glory! like the North it ſtreams!
One mighty Shechinah! refulgent Ray!
That ſcatters Darkneſs o'er the dimmer Day.
The Sun ſeeks Shelter in the waſting Flood;
The conſcious Moon bluſhes herſelf to Blood;
Old Chaos now in double State returns;
With double Ardour ev'ry Comet burns,

Furious they whirl before the SAVIOUR's Throne;
In dreadful Hiſſings ſpeak the eternal Son:
As wide as Space pale Terror ſpreads her Reign,
Of Orders burſt the indiſſoluble Chain:
To CHRIST for ſuccour all Mankind will pray:
But all Mankind can't avert the awful Day.

What Horror ſeize Mankind, which were to Reaſon blind,
Tho' Deiſts once, yet not in Hell ſo found:
How will they then with Wrath and Anguiſh preſt,
The Worm all gnawing on their relenting Breaſt,
Rave, Curſe, Weep, Gnaſh, Groan, and Curſe again,
And Foam, and Roar, tumultuous like the Ocean;
Rend with their Groans Damnation's dark Retreat:
Their Groans are loſt, nor reach the Mercy Seat.

Know then this Truth, ye Deiſts, this believe,
In diſbelieving, you yourſelves deceive.

And now the Judge deſcends, the SAVIOUR comes,
Rend Heav'n, groan Hell, break, burſt, ye Iron Tombs!

The

The living Chariot rattles thro' the Air, *
He ſtalks before, who uſed to dart Deſpair,
Death conquer'd, after crawls in mad Diſmay,
Whole Fields of Light'ning round the Conqu'ror play,
And ruſhing Whirlwinds ruſh along the blazing Way.
Celeſtial Glory circles all his Head,
In Heaven enthron'd, and on Hell doth tread.
As ruſhing Torrents pour their rapid Streams,
So fierce his Fury burns, ſo full his glory Beams:
Millions of Myriads wait upon his Nod,
Saints, Angels, eccho the deſcending God,
Ah! what Difference now from what he once appear'd,
When Unbelievers ſcorn'd him, whom Angels rever'd;
When bloody Drops pour'd forth from every Pore,
And Beings groan'd that never groan'd before.

Lo! view the Croſs on high, the Signal's made,
(Now Wealth and Titles, Crowns and Honours, fade)
For all to liſten, and their Sentence hear,
From the Atheiſt, to the Deiſt's Ear.
Believers then, will with a Shout profound
Proclaim their Joy, expreſs their Bliſs around:

* Ezek. iii. 13.

With Pleaſure now they ſee the Race they run,
Their Labours ended, and their Bliſs begun.

Bleſs'd JESUS ſmiles, pleas'd with their glowing Love,
Approach (he ſays, in ſoft and gentle Strains
Welcome to me, and to celeſtial Realms;
Come then, receive your unſpeakable Reward,
ANGELS conduct them to the Favour of their LORD.

Ye CHERUBS, fly before, with chearful Voice,
Bid Heavens, Dominions, Powers, and Thrones rejoice.
Now with dejected Looks, the Deiſts fears,
Trembles, but no more mocks or jeers,
Slowly they move to meet their dreadful Fate,
And now they howl, and now lament too late:
To theſe in Thunder the Judge prepares to ſpeak,
The Thunders know his Will, and all around him break.
Then darts a Frown that ſhakes all Nature's Frame,
The incarnate GOD now becomes a burning Flame,
Wretches accurſt, ungrateful, and forlorn,
The Jeſt of Devils, and the heavenly Scorn;

No

No Prayers, no Sighs, no Tears wil now avail,
Returning Juſtice lifts aloft her Scale ;
Mercy rejected will not ever laſt,
A Day was once, but oh! that Day is paſt :
In vain for you I liv'd, I bled, I dy'd :
Deiſts begone, taſte Vengeance you deſpis'd,
Conſcience diſtracts them, Devils mock their Cries,
And point with flaming Fingers to the Skies :
Then hurl the Wretches where Flames ever flaſh,
And Smoak, Shrieks, Light'ning, Thunders, always claſh.
Where every Curſe, and every Plague's confin'd,
Where dies all Hope, the cordial of the Mind,
And ever lives the conſcious, guilty, Self-deceiver,
Baniſhed in everlaſting Torments from his deſpiſed,
Rejected SAVIOUR.

The Grand Aſſize Compleatly Ended ;
Chriſt the Judge is Reaſcended ;
The Heavenly Hoſt their Lord Attended
With Shouts of Joy,—TIME IS ENDED.

FINIS.

TO

The GOD of Univerſal Nature,

A

PRAYER,

Compoſed by the Author of the foregoing Epiſtle, for the uſe of thoſe DEISTS who are honeſt, ſincere, and induſtrious in ſearching after Truth, in order to embrace it in the love of it; who are very willing and deſirous to part with every pre-conceived ſentiment, that does or may obſtruct their finding it.

O THOU Almighty, incomprehenſible God of univerſal nature! Thou great firſt cauſe and ſupport of all worlds, creatures, and things viſible and inviſible! O Thou only good, beneficent, generous Being, who haſt ſo excellently diſtinguiſhed mankind from all the other of thy creatures on earth, with that noble faculty of reaſon and underſtanding, with which

I adore

I adore and worſhip Thee, in profound reverence and proſtration of ſoul, and with the moſt hearty, unfeigned ſincerity and gratitude offer up unto thee my thankſgivings and praiſe, in the higheſt ſtrains of devotion a finite creature poſſibly can pay to his Creator, Preſerver, and conſtant, unwearied, munificent Benefactor: at the ſame time with the utmoſt humility of heart and abaſement of ſoul, (to my unſpeakable ſhame and ſorrow) I acknowledge and confeſs before thee, that I have acted very unbecoming the dignity of a rational creature, both toward thee, my neighbour, and myſelf; having very frequently permitted my reaſon and underſtanding to be baffled and conquered by my almoſt ungovernable headſtrong luſts and paſſions; for even when I found myſelf ſomewhat inclined to do good, evil was preſent with me with great prevalency; and I find

my heart and mind much more prone to vice than virtue, to evil than good.

How I came by this corrupted depraved nature, my judgment is not yet convinced of: my reaſon and underſtanding dictates to me, it could not poſſibly be derived from thee, who art the very ſpring and fountain of all goodneſs, perfection and knowledge; conſequently thou muſt have acceſs to the very thoughts of my heart, the deſires of my ſoul, the intentions of my mind, and the actions of my life, from whom no ſecret can poſſibly be concealed. Therefore I moſt humbly and importunately beſeech thee that thou wouldeſt, in the courſe of thy Providence, teach me what I do not perceive, for my ſpiritual advantage, by directing my thoughts, illuminating my underſtanding, conveying to me the knowledge and cauſe of my corrupted vitiated nature, and informing me through what channel I

received

received it, and what remedy I ſhall make uſe of, in order to maſter and conquer it, ſo as to be freed from it. I frequently find my heart cold and lukewarm, languid and lifeleſs, very far from being fired with that love and gratitude to thee my God, which my reaſon and underſtanding dictates is thy juſt unalienable right, due from rational creatures to their great Creator. Therefore I moſt humbly beſeech thee to beget in me a hearty and ſincere affection to love thee, and an earneſt deſire to pleaſe thee in all things, being conſcious I have in innumerable inſtances tranſgreſſed the laws of natural religion, and violated the dictates of reaſon and conſcience, which thou haſt engraven on all the hearts of thy reaſonable creatures. *

* Here call to remembrance the particular ſins you have been guilty of, eſpecially that ſin or ſins that do moſt eaſily beſet you, praying for grace and ſtrength to conquer and overcome them in the future part of life.

I would willingly and chearfully embrace and obey every command that comes from thee, and believe every declaration of thy divine mind and will, that thou haſt been pleaſed to communicate to mankind. I importunately beſeech thee, O Lord, to open my underſtanding, to unlock every power and faculty of my ſoul, to free me from prejudices of all kinds and degrees whatſoever, which poſſibly have prevented, or may prevent, my believing in a book, which chriſtians call the Holy Bible, the word of God; which book I have peruſed, but finding declarations in it, which appears to me inconſiſtent with thy divine perfections, and moral goodneſs, and ſeeming contradictions; (here with an upright, honeſt, ſincere heart recite the particulars) therefore I do not believe thy ſpirit to be the author of them: but whether it is owing to the length of time ſince the Bible was originally wrote, or whether

ther through the revolution of ages and different cuſtoms and languages, and ways and manner of expreſſion, by which means ideas may have been conveyed foreign to what they were intended, I cannot be certain of, therefore am at doubt concerning it; and whether my preconceived maxims of religion, or the indulgence of my unruly, headſtrong paſſions is a principal cauſe of my unbelief, I am not certain of; I find declarations in this Bible relating to faith, which my reaſon and underſtanding do not comprehend, in particular ſuch as theſe, viz. that thy only begotten Son, the brightneſs of thy glory, the expreſs image of thy perſon, partaker of thy very eſſence, the maker of heaven and earth, and all things in it, whom the very angels worſhip and adore: that Deity ſhould condeſcend and humble himſelf, and leave the regions of bliſs and glory, and come down to earth, and unite his

divine

divine nature, to the nature of poor ſinful man, and ſhould be born of a poor virgin, and have a ſtable for his chamber, and a manger for his cradle, and be brought up in his infancy and childhood by the direction of a poor carpenter's family, and when arrived at maturity to travel up and down our wicked world doing good, both to the bodies and ſouls of mankind, giving of them the beſt and wiſeſt inſtruction, who permited many of them (though their Creator) to treat him with all the malice, and ill nature, and injuſtice poſſible, yea, to be murthered by them in a moſt cruel ſhocking manner, yet at the ſame time to pray for them: all which things I muſt confeſs are very far above my comprehenſion, and what appears to me to be incredible. However, I ſincerely confeſs and acknowledge, there are very excellent maxims and rules of life (in this antient book, which the chriſtians call

call the Holy Bible of the Old and New Teſtament) which has and muſt neceſſarily have a very great tendency to make mankind comfortable and happy in this world, and to qualify them for the enjoyment of perfect happineſs in heaven.

The doctrines of this thy only begotten Son are ſuch as theſe, that mankind muſt be born again, or they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, which conſiſts in righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, and that it is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, and that if any man come to this thy reputed only begotten Son, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and ſiſters, and yea his own life alſo, he cannot be his diſciple, who has commanded them to love their very enemies, to bleſs thoſe

that

that curſed them, and to pray for them which deſpitefully uſed them and perſecuted them; the meaning of all which I acknowledge I do not comprehend, therefore can't believe.

However, as I am ſenſible that my underſtanding is limited and finite, O my God, I humbly beſeech thee, if theſe declarations are agreeable to thy divine mind and will; and that if Jeſus Chriſt is thy only begotten Son, and commiſſioned by thee, from heaven, as a Saviour and Redeemer of mankind; and that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life: Be pleaſed to give me a vital faith in him, this Bible declaring that it is by grace mankind are ſaved, through faith, and that not of themſelves, but 'tis thy gift: if it be ſo, I earneſtly implore thee for this gift, as the moſt valuable of all bleſ-

ſings,

ſings, infinitely ſuperior to thouſands and millions of ſilver and gold, yea, to all the riches in the world. But on the contrary, if he is not thy only begotten Son, but an impoſtor, a deceiver, the very vileſt of wretches; I beſeech thee to give me wiſdom and underſtanding to diſcover this very grand cheat and impoſture; that I may be enabled to gainſay and argue with, and write againſt all his advocates, who have moſt artfully wrote to ſupport the truth of his holy miſſion and doctrines; that I may be enabled by thee, to convince all the different denominations of chriſtians in the world, of theſe deceptions and impoſitions that have been foſtered on them and their forefathers, for upwards of ſeventeen hundred and fifty eight years; which concludes my very imperfect petitions; with humility and ſincerity ſupplicating thy divine Majeſty to remove

all

all my prejudices, obſtinacy, and ſelf-conceit, and make me entirely flexible, honeſt, upright, and ſincere; open and free to receive conviction from thee of the truth in the love of it; and that it may influence my heart, ſoul and mind, and govern my thoughts, words, and actions, that they may be uniformly and exactly agreeable and conformable to thy divine unerring mind and will, both in time and to eternity. Amen.

N. B. If the Author of the foregoing Works ſhould be ſo exceeding fortunate as to be a Means in the Hands of Providence of the Converſion of any ſpeculative or practical Atheiſts, and Deiſts, or any Profeſſors of Religion of any Denomination, that are practical Unbelievers of Chriſtianity, ſo as to become the Diſciples indeed of the bleſſed Jeſus, He moſt humbly and earneſtly requeſts that ſuch happy new-born Souls would return Almighty God their unfeigned Thankſgiving and repeated Gratitude of Praiſe, for inclining and enabling him to compoſe them, and to publiſh them to the World; and that he may continually do all poſſible Good both to the Souls and Bodies of his Fellow Mortals univerſally, as extenſive as his Capacity, Circumſtances, and Situation in Life will admit of, even to the very laſt Breath He ſhall draw.

THE PROTESTANT HERO,
The King of Prussia.

THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF TRUTH.

Psalms XXXIII. Chapter.

Verse 12. Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord; and the People whom he hath chosen for his own Inheritance.

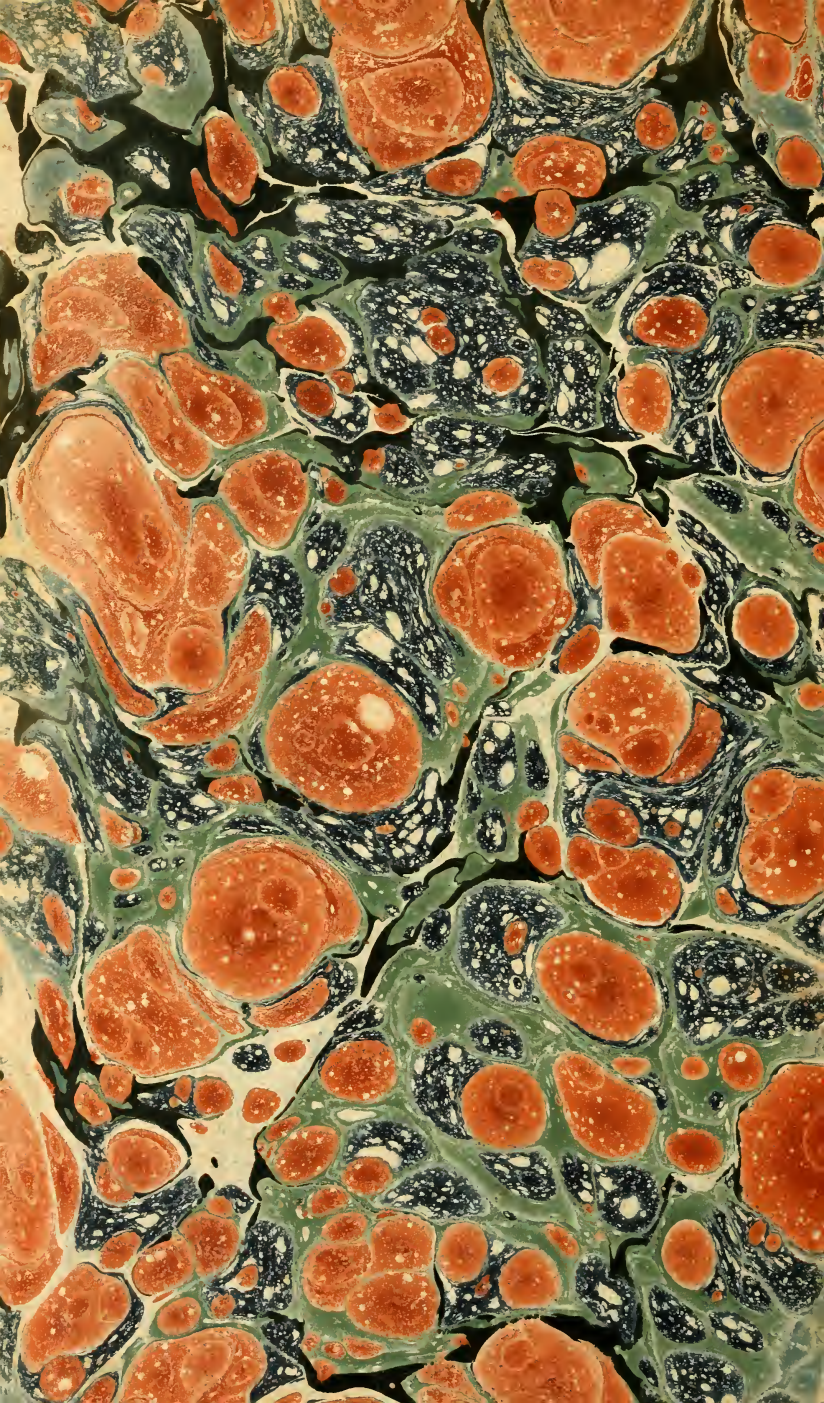
v. 13. The Lord looketh from Heaven; he beholdeth all the Sons of Men.

v. 16. There is no King saved by the Multitude of an host.

Proverbs XX. Chap.

v. 26. A wise King scattereth the Wicked, and bringeth the Wheel over them.

v. 28. Mercy and truth preserve the King: and his Throne is upholden by Mercy.



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